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MUHAMMAD AND THE JEWS

A RE-EXAMINATION

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IN MEMORIAM

ᶜABDUL ᶜAZĪZ

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To those who believe
And do deeds of righteousness
Hath Allāh promised forgiveness
And a great reward.

The Qurᵓān, V, 9.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements viii

Preface ix

PROLOGUE 1

INTRODUCTION 2

I. THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF THE *HIJRAH* 25

II. THE PEOPLE OF THE *ṢAḤĪFAH* 37

III. THE JEWISH SUPPORT TO THE MEDINAN OPPOSITION 51

IV. THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY 67

V. THE LAST ENCOUNTER 95

VI. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT 103

EPILOGUE 126

Bibliography 127

Index 135

MAPS

1. MEDINA IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE *HIJRAH* 31

2. MEDINA AT THE TIME OF THE BATTLE OF THE *AḤZĀB* 69

3. KHAYBAR AND THE POSITION OF THE HOSTILE TRIBES 98

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PREFACE

Intergroup relations, specially when religion is also involved, are full of conflict and suffering. Martyrology feeds the myth, and prejudice adds bitterness to the legend. Political expediency and biased scholarship invest the legend with the status of history. The account of Muhammad's relations with the Jews of the Ḥijāz is one of such legends. I have analysed this chapter of early Muslim history which has been uncritically accepted both by Muslim and non-Muslim historians. If this re-examination succeeds in raising valid doubts about the evidence on which the account is based, the attempt was worth making.

Of the many friends who have helped me at various stages of the progress of this study I wish to thank, in particular, Professors Bernard Lewis, Nicola Ziadeh and Husain Mohammad Jafri. Prof. Nicola Ziadeh helped me to formulate my ideas when the book was little more than a conversation piece. Without his encouragement this book would have never materialised. Prof. Husain Mohammad Jafri subjected each chapter of the first draft to detailed criticism. Prof. Bernard Lewis went over the manuscript word by word and gave practical and helpful suggestions which have influenced almost every chapter of this book. I consider myself most fortunate to have been alerted by him to the many pitfalls which a book such as this is bound to encounter. The book has greatly benefited from his penetrating comments and his advice on the value of Muslim and Jewish sources. My debt to these friends who have been so generous with their time and advice is immeasurable. None of them, however, is responsible for the views and opinions expressed in this book. In fact they hold opposite views on several points raised in this book. My only consolation is that in most of the cases their criticism was not concurrent, wherever it was I bowed to their cumulative judgment. All errors are sadly mine.

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BARAKAT AHMAD

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PROLOGUE

The Historian does not set out to prove a thesis, or select material to establish some point, but follows the evidence where it leads. No human being is free from human failings, among them loyalties and prejudices which may color his perception and presentation of history. The essence of the critical scholarly historian is that he is aware of this fact, and instead of indulging his prejudices seeks to identify and correct them.

The recoverers of history begin of course with what is remembered and transmitted. Unlike their predecessors, however, they are not content merely to repeat and pass on the memories of the past. They seek rather to fill its gaps and correct its errors, and their goals are accuracy and understanding. A frequent result, and sometimes perhaps even a purpose of their efforts, is that by analyzing the past they kill it. The minute and critical examination of treasured memories may reveal them to be false and misleading. Once this exposure becomes generally known, that part of the past loses its power. The scholarly recoverers of the past may therefore exercise a powerful destructive influence. In compensation, they can bring much that is new and enrich the collective memory as well as cleansing it.

BERNARD LEWIS

INTRODUCTION

> Historians, commentators of the Qur°ân and eminent transmitters have committed frequent errors in reporting stories and events. They accepted them as they were transmitted, without regard for their value. They did not check them with the principles underlying such historical situations, nor did they compare them with similar material. They neither measured them with the yardstick of philosophy, with the help of knowledge of the nature of things, nor with the help of speculation and historical insight. Therefore, they strayed from the truth and found themselves lost in the desert of untenable assumptions and errors.
>
> — IBN KHALDŪN

In 1833 the Rabbi at Wiesbaden, Abraham Geiger wrote a prize essay *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen ?*[1] Rudolf Leszynsky, who also wrote a book on a related subject,[2] called Geiger's essay "*epochemachender Schrift*" (epoch-making writing). Since then several books and articles dealing with various aspects of the Muslim-Jewish relations have been written. The latest is, probably, Goitein's book *Jews and Arabs*.[3] For Western scholars the origin of Islam, and specially of the Qur°ān, has always been a fascinating subject. "Who instructed the Prophet, who were these teachers?"[4] After observing that "a somewhat uneven literature has grown up around the question"[5], Goitein concludes that it seems

[1] Geiger's book was translated into English by F.M. Young and printed in India in 1896 under the title *Judaism and Islam*. Ktav Publishing House, New York, republished the translation in 1970.

[2] *Die Juden in Arabien zur Zeit Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1910).

[3] S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs:Their Contacts Through the Ages* (New York, 1955).

[4] *Ibid.*,

[5] *Ibid.*,

reasonable to assume that in his early years Muhammad had close contact with Jews, who were not very different from those portrayed in the Talmudic literature"[1]. Consequently the beliefs of the Apostle's Jewish neighbours and the nature of his contact with them had a direct bearing on the substance of what he borrowed from Judaism. Western scholarship is, however, mainly confined to these factors. Its research work has helped us in understanding the Apostle's relations with the Jews of the Ḥijāz and specially those of Yathrib. But some of the reports on which this research depends have not been critically examined. Scholars have also not paid sufficient attention to the socio-political aspects of intergroup relations.

Rabbi Geiger, whose book is "still valuable"[2] had both the advantage and disadvantage of working without the vast Arabic literature the modern orientalist has at his disposal.[3] But *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Ta'rīkh al-Bashar*[4] of Abū al-Fidā'(672/1273-732/1331) was available to him through J. Gagnier, *De vita Mohammedis* (Oxford, 1723), J. J. Reiske and J. G. Chr. Adler's *Annales Moslemici* (Leipzig, 1754 and Copenhagen, 1789-94) and *Historia Anteislamica*. He was also acquainted with al-Bayḍāwī's commentary on the Qur'ān and the "excellent unpublished commentary by Elpherar which begins with the 7th Surah".[5] He dealt with his subject fairly extensively. From his point of view the nature of the Apostle's relationship with the Jews of Yathrib was not pertinent. He made a passing reference to the Banū Qaynuqā', the Banū al-Naḍīr and also to the Jews of Khaybar, but did not mention the Banū Qurayẓah. He must have known about them not only through Abū al-Fidā' but also through the commentary on the Qur'ān. If he had thought it necessary he had the material at hand to deal with the struggle "forced on the Jews and Muḥammad", which according to Goitein, "has left its mark on the Holy Book of Islam."[6]

[1] S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, p. 56.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 237.
[3] Such works as Ibn Hishām's *Sīrah*, al-Wāqidī's *Maghāzī*, and Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* were neither published by then nor probably known to him.
[4] It is a universal history covering the pre-Islamic period and Muslim history down to 729/1329.
[5] Geiger, p. VII Yaḥya b. Ziyād b. 'Abd Allāh b. Manẓūr (144/761-207/822) known as al-Farrā' wrote a commentary on the Qur'ān, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, which is still in manuscript form.
[6] Goitein, p. 64.

Between Geiger and Leszynsky, while Muir[1], Grimme[2], Caetani[3], Graetz[4] and others dealt with the subject within the larger context of their researches, Wensinck wrote a doctoral thesis on the Apostle and the Jews of Medina.[5] Since Leszynsky, Lammens[6], Wolfenson,[7] Horovitz[8], Torrey[9], Hirschberg[10], Baron[11] and Goitein have dealt with the same material.

Montgomery Watt in his *Muhammad at Medina*[12] also devoted a whole chapter to the Jews of Yathrib. No Muslim, as far as I know, has given the subject the importance of an independent study and research. Most of the non-Muslim scholarship is tied down to the main theme of the Jewish influence on Islam, the Apostle's disappointment at his rejection by the Jews and the subsequent expulsion and 'extermination' of the Jews. The subject has not been dealt with in its proper socio-political context.

Some of the familiar intellectual attitudes towards non-Muslims, crystallized into patterns of thought, have been repeated for centuries and worn smooth by generations of Muslim jurists and historians. The theme of prejudice and discrimination against *ahl al-dhimma*, mainly based on the works of Muslim jurists, invariably serves as an introduction to the history of Muslim-Jewish relations. The approach, unfortunately, too often sacrifices history to jurisprudence and ignores historical facts in favour of legend which, in the course of time acquired theological colouring.

[1] Sir William Muir, *Life of Muhammad* (London, 1861).
[2] H. Grimme, *Mohammed* (Münster, 1892-1895).
[3] Leone Caetani, *Annali dell' Islam* (Milan, 1905 ff).
[4] H. Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1894) Vol. III.
[5] A.J. Wensinck, *Mohammed en de Joden te Medina* (Leiden, 1908). Klaus Schwarz, Freiburg im Breisgau, published an English translation in 1975.
[6] Henri Lammens, *"Les Juifs à la Mecque à la veille de l'Hégire", L'Arabie occidentale avant l' Hégire* (Beyrouth, 1928).
[7] Israel Wolfenson, *Taʾrīkh al-Yahūd fī Bilād al-ʿArab* (Cairo, 1927).
[8] Joseph Horovitz, "Judaeo-Arabic Relations in Pre-Islamic Times", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. III (1929).
[9] Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York, 1967, first published in 1933).
[10] Joachim Wilhelm (Haim Zeev) Hirschberg, *Israel in Arabia* (Tel Aviv, 1946), in Hebrew.
[11] Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1957), Vol. III.
[12] (Oxford, 1962, first published in 1956).

From the inadequate material at our disposal it is not easy to reconstruct the past as it happened. Muslim historians were not interested in the fate of the Jews, and the Jews themselves have not left any record of their first encounter with Islam. Though the available material is, indeed, meagre, fragmentary and at times contradictory, nevertheless there is enough ground to call for a critical re-examination of these accounts.

The study is essentially based on the following sources :

1. The Qur$^{\circ}$ān;
2. *Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*,[1] Ibn Hishām's recension of the original work of Ibn Isḥāq (d.151/768);
3. *Al-Jāmī al-Ṣaḥīḥ*[2] compiled by Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869);
4. *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*[3] of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/874).

Throughout this study I have, of course, examined *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*[4] of al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) and *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*[5] of Ibn Sa^{c}d (d. 230/845), but the main burden of the argument rests on the four sources given above.

The basic source of the history of early Islam is of course the Qur$^{\circ}$ān. It is contemporaneous with the Apostle's life and offers a running commentary on all the important events which took place in his lifetime. But the Qur$^{\circ}$ān is not a book of history; history depends on precise chronology, whereas no real idea of the dates or sequence of events can be obtained from it. But it plays a very important role in checking the truth of many an incident which happened during the Apostle's lifetime.

Muslim compilers of the biographical dictionaries of the Companions of the Apostle, later Muslim historians, Western scholars and modern Muslim historians have written exhaustively in criticism of Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa^{c}d. We shall not cover that ground once again. Historical understanding, however, is the constant rethinking of the past. Historical knowledge is inseparable from personal knowledge, which is very much involved with contemporary problems. "It is thus that, in a sense, all history is contemporary, too".[6]

[1] Ed. by F. Wüstenfeld (2 vols. Gottingen, 1856-60).
[2] (3 vols. Cairo: Al-Sha^{c}b Press. n. d.).
[3] (2 vols. Lahore: Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1958-62).
[4] Ed. by Marsden Jones (2 vols. London, 1966).
[5] (8 vols. Beirut, 1957 ff).
[6] John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness; or, The Remembered Past* (New York, 1968), p. 35.

In other words, whatever past the historian chooses to discover, he does it with the historical consciousness of his time. "There is not a part of history which is objective—the facts—and another part—the historian's interpretation or judgment—which is subjective. Judgment and interpretation are equally inherent in deciding what are facts, which are the relevant ones in a certain context, and how significant they are."[1] Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa°d, who wrote during the early Abbāsid period, have been closely scrutinised in terms of Shī°ite and Sunnite partisanship, or their bias towards B. Umayyah or B. al-°Abbās. Muslim historians and orientalists have been so preoccupied with "the outbreak of the *fitna*"[2] and the early schism in Islam that they have overlooked the total environment in which the eighth/ninth century *sīrah* and *maghāzī* writers worked. They noted Shī°ite and Sunnite tendencies of their early authors, their Umayyad and Abbasid bias, and their attitude to the prevailing theological controversies. But the historical consciousness of Ibn Isḥāq and others was influenced by several other factors also. As Petersen observes: "The Abbasid period's political situations might have influenced the historical recorders' changing attitudes to the earliest history of Islam."[3] But these situations did not involve only "the new rulers' settling with their revolutionary past, the coalition with Shī°ism in the combat against the Syrian caliphate".[4] New lands were being conquered, more and more non-Arab and non-Muslims with their distinct cultures, languages and religions were entering the world of Islam. They brought new ideas and new problems. All these new elements had an impact on the thinking of the early authors. From our point of view their attitude to contemporary Jewish life under the Abbasids is a vital factor in judging the information they impart on the relations of the Jews with the Apostle.

Our earliest and most important source for events which took place in the Apostle's lifetime is Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq b. Yasār b. Khiyār who was born in Medina in about 85/704 during the last year of °Abd al-Malik's reign. His grandfather, Yasār, was among those

[1] Gordon Leff, *History and Social Theory* (University, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 1969), p. 124.

[2] Erling Ladewig Petersen, *°Alī and Mu°āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Copenhagen, 1964), p. 18. Odense University Press published a new edition in 1974.

[3] Petersen, p. 19.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

taken prisoner at ᶜAyn al-Tamr. He became the slave of Qays b. Makhramah b. al-Muṭṭalib b. ᶜAbd Manāf b. Qusayy, and having accepted Islam became his *mawla*. It was during ᶜAbd al-Malik's reign that Mecca was besieged and the Kaᶜbah destroyed. But he was also the caliph who consolidated the Arab rule and left a splendid empire. For about thirty years Ibn Isḥāq lived in Medina where Imām Mālik and Saᶜīd al-Musayyib[1] were his contemporaries. He was taught by many teachers who were sons of the *ṣaḥābah*. The great Traditionist al-Zuhrī was among his teachers. The man who roused the antagonism of Imām Mālik and the admiration of al-Zuhrī was obviously not an ordinary person, and the time in which he lived was not ordinary either. Spain, Kashghar and Multan were conquered while he was still in Medina. He also saw the collapse of the Umayyads and the rise of the Abbasids. He died in Baghdad between 150/767 and 154/770 in the reign of al-Manṣūr. Much has been written about his life, and his work has been evaluated from every point of view.[2] Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship has, however, ignored the events which took place in his lifetime and influenced his views regarding the Jews living under Muslim rule. On his arrival in the Abbasid capital Ibn Isḥāq must have observed that the Jewish community

which had the appearance of a state, had a peculiar constitution. The Exilarch and the Gaon were of equal rank. The Exilarch's office was political. He represented Babylonian-Persian Judaism under the Caliphs. He collected the taxes from the various communities, and paid them into the treasury. The Exilarchs, both in bearing and mode of life, were princes. They drove about in a state carriage; they had outriders and a kind of body-guard, and received princely homage....

[1] Abū Muḥammad Saᶜīd b. al-Musayyib (15/636-94/712) was born during the caliphate of ᶜUmar. A *faqīh* and *muftī*, he was highly regarded by ᶜUmar II. Al-Zuhrī, Makḥūl and Qatādah considered him one of the greatest scholars.

[2] See Ibn Saᶜd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra* (Beirut, 1958), Vol. VII, pp. 32 ff.; al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh al-Kabīr* (Hyderabad, 1361), Vol. I, p. 40; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* (Hyderabad, 1956), Vol. I, pp. 172-74; Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* (Hyderabad, 1326), Vol. IX, pp. 38-45; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* (Cairo, 1931), pp. 214-34; Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-Aᶜyān wa-Anbāʾ Abnāʾ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ᶜAbbās (Beirut, n. d.), Vol. IV, pp. 276-7; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ᶜUyūn al-Athar fī Funūn al-Maghāzī wa al-Shamāʾil wa-al-Siyar* (Cairo, 1356), Vol. I, pp. 8-17; Johann Fück, *Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq* (Frankfurt am Main, 1925); J. Horovitz, "The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors", *Islamic Culture*, (1928), pp. 169-80; A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (London, 1955), Introduction; Muhammad Hamidullah, *Muhammad Ibn Isḥāq* (Karachi, 1967).

Now that the Exilarch everywhere met with the respect due a prince, he was installed with a degree of ceremony and pomp ... In a large open place, which was lavishly adorned, seats were erected for him and the presidents of the two schools. The Gaon of Sora delivered an address to the future Exilarch, in which he was reminded of the duties of his office ... Both officials put their hands upon the head of the nominee and declared amidst the clang of trumpets, "Long live our lord, the Prince of the Exile."[1]

Leon Nemoy has accused Graetz of pro-Muslim bias and said that "Graetz must bear a large share of the blame" for the current illusion that Jewish life under the rule of the Crescent was somehow far easier than it was under the sway of the Cross.[2] What Graetz wrote about the Exilarchate is factually correct and is supported by Margolis and Marx[3], Hirschberg,[4] and Bashan[5]. But Graetz wrote his history in 1894 under the shadow of the Dreyfus affair, and Leon Nemoy wrote his words of criticism in 1956, probably on the eve of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and Sinai. It is not the facts which have changed, it is the perspective. Graetz is pre-Herzl (the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel in 1897), Nemoy is post-Israeli. But even Goitein, whose book Nemoy was reviewing, after cautious qualifications admits that under the Abbasids

the Resh Galutha occupied a very honoured position as the general representative of the Jewish community. According to a Christian source, he had precedence over the Christian dignitaries at the Caliph's court, but as a rule he had no administrative function within the Muslim state. He was addressed by the Muslims as 'Our Lord, the son of David', and as David is described in the Koran as one of the greatest prophets, naturally his office was surrounded by the halo of sanctity...

Of far greater importance for the Jews in Islamic countries than the office of the Resh Galutha was another ecumenical dignity, that of the *Gaon*, which became indeed so prominent in Jewish life during the first five centuries of Islam that these are labelled in Jewish history as 'the Gaonic Period'. *Gaon* was the title borne by the heads of the two great Jewish academies of Babylonia-Iraq (originally only one

[1] Graetz, Vol. III, pp. 93-94.
[2] Review of S.D. Goitein's book *Jews and Arabs*, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 4, 1956, p. 386.
[3] Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, *A History of the Jewish People*, (New York, 1965), pp. 254-57.
[4] Haim Z'ew Hirschberg, "Abbasids", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), Vol. II, Cols. 42-3.
[5] Eliezer Bashan, "Exilarch", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. VI, Cols. 1023-34.

of the two) who were regarded by Jews all over the world as the highest authority in all religious matters, which to be sure, also included at that time civil law.[1]

While Ibn Isḥāq was still in Medina, a Syrian, Serene (Serenus)[2] by name claimed to be the Messiah and held out the promise of a miraculous restoration of Palestine. He set himself up not only as a prophet of the Jews but also as a prophet of the Muslims. He abolished the dietary laws, allowed marriage without a marriage contract and "inscribed the release from Talmudical Ordinances" upon his banner.[3] His fame spread as far as Spain, which was now under Muslim rule, and "the Jews of that country resolved to abandon their property and to place themselves under the leadership of the pseudo-Messiah".[4] He was finally captured and brought before Yazīd II (101/720-105/725), who handed him into the hands of Jews. He was sentenced to death by a Jewish-Muslim court.[5]

Within less than a quarter of a century Abū Muslim hoisted the black flag of revolt at Merv, and Abū al-ᶜAbbās, after eliminating the Umayyads, proclaimed himself Caliph in 132/749. His successor al-Manṣūr treacherously murdered Abū Muslim in 137/755. Iran and specially Khurasan, which was loyal to Abū Muslim, once more became a centre of storms and revolutions. New uprisings followed. Sinbadh (140/757)[6], Ustadhsis (149/766-151/768)[7], al-Muqannaᶜ (161/777-164/780)[8] rose to avenge Abū Muslim's death. All of them were crushed by al-Manṣūr.

It was sometime during this period, but before the *Sīrah* was compiled, that a second Jewish Messiah arose in the strong Jewish centre of Isfahan. Ibn ᶜĪsa Obadiah[9] claimed that Palestine was to be

[1] Goitein, pp. 120-121. During the first hundred years of Fatimid rule the *Gaon*, or head of the Jerusalem Academy, occupied a similar position with regard to the Jews of the Fatimid empire. See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, Vol. II, pp. 5-18, 519-524.

[2] There seems to be considerable controversy about his name.

[3] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 120.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[5] Margolis and Marx, p. 259.

[6] Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1928), Vol. I, p. 313.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 318.

[9] The name is variously given. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* version has been followed. Hyamson (infra n. 2 on p. 10) gives it as Isaac ben Yaᶜqūb Obadiah Abū ᶜĪsa al-Iṣfahānī. Shahrastanī calls him Isḥāq b. Yaᶜqūb (infra n. 1 on p. 10).

restored not by a miracle but by force. He called the Jews to his standard and some ten thousand Jews collected under his leadership hailing him as the Messiah.[1] His uprising was well-timed, since the Abbasid Caliphate was still not consolidated. "The affairs of the Khalifate were at that period in a chaotic condition, and a military movement, such as Isaac's soon became, had good chances of success".[2] Ibn ʿĪsa had planned to join forces with a Persian rebel chief against the Caliph, but al-Manṣūr defeated him at Rayy, where he fell in battle.[3]

"These messianic uprisings", Grayzel observes, "were based on a strange mixture of ideas. The desire of a fairly large number of Jews to throw off the yoke of their new Mohammedan masters was bound up, somehow, with rebelliousness against Jewish authority."[4]

It is difficult to say how the author of the *Sīrah* reacted to these events. As a confident member of the dominant elite he could ignore the revolts, smugly look at Jewish prosperity and freedom under Islam and deal with the history of the Jews in the Ḥijāz during the life of the Apostle with detachment. Or did the impact of the messianic movements juxtaposed with the pomp and show of the Exilarch give him an impression of Jewish infidelity and ungratefulness? Were his reporters (who were the sons of converted Jews)[5] aware of these events, nervous and outdoing the Arab Muslims in their loyalty by embellishing their reports about the Jews of Medina? One is tempted to speculate—and not without reason—that the B. Qaynuqāʿ, the B. al-Naḍīr and above all the B. Qurayẓah were not so much part of the *maghāzī* of the Apostle as much as a warning to the Jews of the Abbasid empire: 'one more Ibn ʿĪsa and you will be exterminated like the B. Qurayẓah'. It is idle to ask whether Ibn Isḥāq was not hearing the echoes of the trumpets at the installation of the Exilarch retro-

[1] Maimonides *Iggeret Teman, vide* Israel Friedlander, "Jewish Arabic Studies", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. I (1910-11), p. 206. Shahrastānī; *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Cairo, 1968), Vol. I, p. 180, says a large crowd of Jews followed him.

[2] Albert M. Hyamson, "Messiahs (Pseudo-)", *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York, 1916), Vol. III, p. 582.

[3] In addition to Shahrastānī and Maimonides see Graetz, Vol. III, p. 124-5, and Margolis and Marx, p. 259.

[4] Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews* (New York, 1968), p. 245.

[5] Ibn Ḥajar Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, IX, p. 45.

spectively when the camel caravan of the unlucky B. al-Naḍīr wound its way from Medina to Khaybar. It was on such an occasion when Nöldeke simply remarked: "It may have been so; but maybe it was entirely different."[1]

But one thing is certain: Ibn Isḥāq's attitude, as we shall see later in our examination of his reports, is consistently tilted against the Jews of the Ḥijāz.

Ibn Isḥāq has been commended by the early Muslim *rijāl* specialists and modern scholars—Muslim and non-Muslim. Though "as is usual in the literature of *djarh wa taᶜdīl*, we find the early Muslim critics expressing diametrically opposed judgments on Ibn Isḥāk",[2] the majority holds him in high regard. Al-Zuhrī described him as "the most knowledgeable of men in *maghāzī*"[3] and ᶜĀṣim b. ᶜUmar b. Qatādah said that "knowledge will remain amongst us as long as Ibn Isḥāq lives".[4] Shuᶜbah b. al-Ḥajjāj (85/704-160/776) described him the *amīr* of Traditionists because of his memory.[5] Sufyān b. ᶜUyaynah (107/725-198/813) said he did not know anyone who accused (*yattahim*) Ibn Isḥāq (in *Ḥadīth*).[6] Imām Shāfiᶜī said, "he who wants to study the *maghāzī* in depth should consult Ibn Isḥāq".[7] Yaḥya b. Maᶜīn and Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal considered him trustworthy.[8]

Mālik b. Anas, however, called him a "*dajjāl* (charlatan) who belongs to the *dajājilah*".[9] According to various versions, Hishām b. ᶜUrwah also did not consider Ibn Isḥāq worthy of credence.[10] The

[1] Quoted by Franz Rosenthal in his introduction to Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, p. 7.

[2] J.M.B. Jones, "Ibn Isḥāk", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., Vol.III, pp.810-811.

[3] Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *ᶜUyūn al-Athar fī Funūn al-Maghāzī wa al-Shamāᵓil wa al-Siyar* (Cairo, 1356), Vol. I, p. 8. Though a late writer (d. 734/1334), Ibn Sayyid al-Nās collected all the available references to Ibn Isḥāq, both favourable and unfavourable and then tried to defend him against his critics. In his introduction to *ᶜUyūn* (pp. 5-21) Ibn Sayyid al-Nās has provided the most comprehensive summary of Muslim opinion of Ibn Isḥāq.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 9; *Tahdhīb*, Vol. IX, p. 44.

[5] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb Taᵓrīkh al-Kabīr*, Vol. I. p. 40.

[6] *Ibid.*; Ibn Khallikān, Vol. IV, p. 276.

[7] Ibn Khallikān, Vol. IV, p. 276.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 276-7; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, pp 10-11.

[9] Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-Udabāᵓ*, (Cairo, 1935-38), II, p. 400.

[10] See for fuller discussion, Joseph Horovitz, "The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors", *Islamic Culture*, April 1928, pp. 169-80; Hamidullah (1967).

most pertinent criticism, from our point of view, is Ibn Isḥāq's method of "tracing the *ghazawāt* of the Prophet by means of the sons of the Jews who had become Muslims and remembered the story of Khaybar and other matters".[1] Dealing with this charge and the quarrel between Ibn Isḥāq and the great Traditionist Mālik b. Anas, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās concludes that both of them were finally reconciled and when Ibn Isḥāq left Medina for Iraq Mālik gave him fifty dinars and half of his date crop of the year as a gift. Mālik did not intend to malign him as a Traditionist but he did question his acceptance of the reports of Khaybar, Qurayẓah and al-Naḍīr and such other unattested events from the Jewish converts (from their fathers). Ibn Isḥāq followed these reports in his *maghāzī* without necessarily ascertaining the true facts whereas Mālik himself did not report except from reliable men.[2]

As we shall see while examining the various reports of Ibn Isḥāq, the charge does not seem to be without substance. While converts from one religion to another are not necessarily unreliable, a historian should closely scrutinize reports emanating from them. The very fact of their conversion means that they considered the attitude, the policy and the action of their erstwhile co-religionists objectionable, if they were sincere in their conversion; it was expedient to disassociate themselves from their action, if the conversion was forced. In any case their tendency in remembering and reproducing the events of their past or the past of their ancestors directly involved in conflicts with their new co-religionist will be subconsciously—and sometimes deliberately—prejudicial to the task of ascertaining true facts. One might, however, ask in parenthesis if Mālik b. Anas's charge was fair. It shows a latter-day prejudice against the Jewish converts. Why should they be less reliable than the sons of the pagan Arab converts? Would the Muslim sons of those Meccan pagans who fought the Apostle not distort the role of their ancestors in the same manner as the sons of the Jewish converts, to gain acceptability? Their reports need as much verification as those of the Jewish converts.

Referring to Ibn Isḥāq's methodology of reporting the events in Medina Horovitz observes :

> Here the *isnād* is the rule, and the authorities of Ibn Isḥāq are his Medina teachers, above all al-Zuhrī, ᶜĀsim ibn ᶜUmar and ᶜAbdullāh ibn Abī Bakr, to whom also he is already indebted for the chronological scaffolding... For the presentation of

[1] *Tahdhīb*, Vol IX, p, 45.
[2] Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Vol. I, p. 17.

the actual *Maghāzī*, Ibn Isḥāq employs a fixed scheme; he sends a brief comprehensive statement of contents on in front, follows it up with a collective account composed of the statements of his weightiest teachers and completes this principal account by individual reports gathered by him from other sources.[1]

Horovitz' observations are mainly valid as far as Ibn Isḥāq's general narrative is concerned. His account of the four Jewish *maghāzi*, however, is at variance with his general scheme. ᶜĀṣim b. ᶜUmar b. Qatādah is the main informant of the important events in the affair of the B. Qaynuqāᶜ and no Jewish reporter is involved. The deportation of the B. al-Naḍīr also follows the general pattern. The main story begins with Yazīd b. Rumān reporting it direct to Ibn Isḥāq.

With the B. Qurayẓah the pattern seems to break down. Most of the main events, as we shall see, are not preceded by *isnāds*. Several reliable reporters like al-Zuhrī and Qatādah appear during the narrative, but a closer examination discloses that they are reporting minor details, not the major events. The account of the expedition to the Khaybar presents the same mixture of reports, some based on *isnāds*, others without *isnāds*. Again one comes across important names preceding some reports, but most of them pertain to either juristic matters or minor details.

It might perhaps be safe to say that generally speaking Ibn Isḥāq does not give *isnāds* on crucial matters concerning the B. Qurayẓah or the Jews of Khaybar. Writing on Ibn Isḥāq's use of the *isnād* Robson agrees with the observation of Horovitz quoted above and goes on to say :

> He commonly begins his treatment of some incident by a general statement of what happened without any authority being quoted but this is merely his method of introducing the subject, for he usually goes on to give *isnāds* of various kinds for details of the incident, or to present different statements of what happened.[2]

Robson further observes :

> ... Ibn Isḥāq is quite open about his methods. He does not claim that all the information he gives is full of authority, nor does he try to trace everything back to the Prophet. We may therefore be inclined to trust him when he does quote direct authorities and when he gives connected *isnāds*.[3]

When Ibn Isḥāq does not give an *isnād* he is either dealing with material

[1] Horovitz, *IC* (1928), p. 176.
[2] James Robson, "Ibn Ishāq's Use of the Isnād", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 38, 1955-56, p. 451.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 457.

which was "so well known and well authenticated that it was unnecessary to produce the evidence of an *isnād*"[1] or is drawing upon "a common corpus of *qāṣṣ* and traditional material, which they (*sīrah-maghāzī* writers) arranged according to their own concepts and to which they added their own researches."[2] It would be reasonable therefore, to assume that the lack of an *isnād* for some of the major events concerning the B. Qurayẓah and most of the important events of Khaybar indicates that Ibn Isḥāq drew his material from the 'common corpus of qāṣṣ'. We may revert here to Imām Mālik's charge that Ibn Isḥāq traced the *ghazawāt* of the Apostle by means of the sons of the converted Jews who remembered the stories of the B. al-Naḍīr, the B. Qurayẓah and Khaybar. An examination of Ibn Isḥāq's *isnāds* shows that out of three hundred and four *isnāds*, which he used in the *Sīrah* there are only nine in which a Jewish convert or a Jew is involved.[3] The names of the Jewish reporters and the subjects of their reports are given below : [4]

1. Abū Mālik b. Thaʿlabah b. Abū Mālik al-Quraẓī, The Ḥimyarites accepted Judaism after the rabbis with their sacred books hanging from their necks walked through fire without any harm to them; [5]
2. Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraẓī,
   i) Conversion of the people of Najrān to Christianity by ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Thāmir; [6]
   ii) ʿUtbah b. Rabīʿah's proposal to the Apostle offering him money, honour etc. if he stopped insulting their gods; [7]
   iii) The Apostle badly treated by the Thaqīf in Ṭāʾif; [8]

[1] James Robson, "Ibn Isḥāqs Use of the Isnād", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 38, 1955-56, p. 452.

[2] J.M.B. Jones, "Ibn Isḥāq and Al-Wāqidī", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XXII, 1959, p. 51.

[3] The *isnād* count is based on *Isnād* Index given in Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. by Dr. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (2 Vols. Gottingen, 1860), pp. 58-69. This number does not include Ibn Hishām's *isnāds*.

[4] I have tried to follow as closely as possible the order in which a Jewish reporter appears in the *Sīrah*.

[5] Ibn Hishām, p. 17.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 24.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 185-87.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 279-80.

iv) The Apostle's departure from his house in Mecca on his way to Medina;[1]
v) The raid on Al-ʿUshayrah (2/623);[2]
vi) The occasion of the revelation of the 127th verse of *Sūrat al-Anfāl*;[3]
vii) Abū Sufyān's order to break camp after the Battle of *al-Aḥzāb*;[4]
viii) Abū Dharr's death;[5]

3. A shaikh of the B. Qurayẓah,
   The prophecy of a Syrian Jew, Ibn al-Hayyabān, that a prophet would migrate to Medina;[6]
4. The *Aḥbār* of the Jews,
   The fulfilment of Ibn al-Hayyabān's prophecy;[7]
5. One of the family of ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām,
   The story of ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām's conversion to Islam;[8]
6. Ṣafīyah bint Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab,
   Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab's determination to oppose the Apostle;[9]
7. One of the B. Qurayẓah,
   ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣūriya's testimony that the Jews knew Muhammad was a prophet sent by God;[10]
8. One of Yāmīn's family,
   Yāmīn gave a man money to kill ʿAmr b. Jiḥāsh, who had attempted to kill the Apostle;[11]
9. ʿAṭīyah al-Quraẓī,
   ʿAṭīyah was not executed with other adults of the B. Qurayẓah as he was a lad.[12]

None of the above reports refers to Khaybar and only the last two reports provide information on one minor episode each in the

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 326.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 422.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 584-85.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 683-84.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 901.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 353-54.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 354-55.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 394-95.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 654.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 692.

ghazawāt of the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah. It seems to be obvious that Imām Mālik's charge was not based on the above reports. A more reasonable explanation is that Imām Mālik had a fuller knowledge of the *qāṣṣ* material current at the time and was in a position to locate the stories which originated from the sons of the Jewish converts. Ibn Isḥāq seems to have seen no harm in incorporating this material in his *Sīrah* without verification and without *isnād.* Imām Mālik objected to this procedure. Levi Della Vida's observation on the subject confirms our view :

> The abundance and the variety of material collected by Ibn Isḥāq forced him to enlarge the circle of his authorities and to accept a number of insufficiently supported traditions. *He even takes care to give the source, not always particularly clear, of some of his information, especially when, as is often the case, it goes back to Jewish or Christian sources.*[1]

Ibn Isḥāq had no direct knowledge of the events and in view of the self-contradictory nature of the accounts one would have expected that he would either qualify his statements or absolve himself of the responsibility of reporting something of which he either had no direct knowledge or which he thought was of a doubtful nature. In all other doubtful cases he normally uses phrases such as "in what has reached me"[2], or "it was mentioned to me"[3] or he would simply finish a story by adding that God knows best what happened. Ibn Isḥāq does not show this caution and scrupulousness in his account of the B. Qurayẓah.

The Umayyads encouraged the collection and preservation of the Traditions, anecdotes and accounts of the *maghāzī.* Many *tābiᶜūn* were involved in these efforts; scholars like Mūsa b. ᶜUqbah wrote the accounts of *maghāzī* while a Traditionist like Mālik b. Anas collected the Traditions. But it was Ibn Isḥāq whose *Sīrah* provided a complete history: pre-Islamic background, pre-*Hijrah* struggle in Medina, the expansion of Islam after the truces of Hudaibiyah and Khaybar, together with a biography of the Apostle (complete with miracles) which could stand up to any hagiography of a Christian saint. This is not to impute motives or a conscious effort on the part of Ibn Isḥāq to fabricate miracles or to pick and choose from the *qāṣṣ* material reports emanating from the descendants of the Jewish converts to Islam. There is no reason to disagree with Guillaume's observation

[1] G. Levi Della Vida, "Sīra", *EI*(1), Vol. IV, p. 442. The italics are mine.
[2] *fī mā balaghanī.*
[3] *dhukira li*

that Ibn Isḥāq's life of the Apostle "is recorded with honesty and truthfulness and, too, an impartiality which is rare in such writings".[1] But a historian is very much part of his time. He cannot isolate himself from the climate of opinion in which he breathes. Men can do only what the norms of their times permit, declared Macaulay.[2]

To sum up, the character of Ibn Isḥāk in comparison with the authors who preceded him is that of a real historian and in him we have the final fusion of biography of the religious type of the *muḥaddithūn* with that of the epic-legendary type of the *kuṣṣāṣ*. It is this original and personal character of the work of Ibn Isḥāk, which, while it explains the hostility of the school of traditions, justifies the immense success which it has enjoyed through the centuries, a success which has not only overshadowed similar previous works and some which closely followed him ... but made him a decisive influence on the future development of the *Sīra*. In addition to Ibn Hishām's recension, Ibn Isḥāk's biography was reproduced for the most part by al-Ṭabarī in his two great compilations, the *Ta'rīkh* and the *Tafsīr* and through the intermediary of these two writers it has become the principle source of later historiography.[3]

By the time al-Wāqidī (130/747–207/823) and Ibn Sa'd (168/784–230/845) completed their works both the Abbasid caliphate and the post-Islamic Exilarchate were firmly established. Ibn 'Īsa al-Iṣfahānī's rebellion had been forgotten and forgiven. The Saboras who headed the two leading academies at Sura and Pumbaditha had given themselves the new title of Gaon, "Your Eminence", and were recognized by the Caliphs as the judicial authority for the Jews within the Muslim Empire. Yehudi ben Naham during his brief term of office (760-764) helped to lay the foundations of what may be described as the invisible Jewish government in exile. The Jews in the Diaspora were governed through the Gaonic Responsa.

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī was born in Medina and was called al-Wāqidī after his grandfather al-Wāqid, who was a *mawla* of 'Abd Allāh b. Buraida who belonged to a Medinite family. His only surviving work is *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (The Book of Expeditions). Within that limited scope he has collected some very useful information about the Medinite life of the Apostle. *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* of Ibn Sa'd, who was al-Wāqidī's pupil and secretary, is

[1] Guillaume, p. xxiv.

[2] Quoted by Melvin Maddocks, the reviewer of his biography by John Clive, *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* (New York, 1974), in *Time*, April 22, 1974, p. 90.

[3] G. Levi Della Vida, "Sīra", *EI*(1) Vol. IV, p. 442.

based mostly on his teacher's work, but it is a compilation of great value. Named *The Great Book of Classes*, it is in fact an extended dictionary or *Who's Who* containing biographies of the Apostle, his *aṣḥāb* (Companions) and *tābiᶜūn*, the later bearers of Islam, conveniently arranged under classes.

Both of them are chroniclers of events, collectors of anecdotes and repositories of the remembered past, but lack historical consciousness, which Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Hishām show. We shall, therefore, use them, depending on the reliability of their reports, to check, supplement and evaluate Ibn Isḥāq's account of the events with which we are concerned.

The *rijāl* critics consider al-Wāqidī unreliable. Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal calls him a liar[1] and al-Dhahabī says, "he is no longer cited".[2] According to Ibn Khallikān, "the Traditions received from him are considered of feeble authority, and doubts have been expressed on the subject of his veracity".[3] On the other hand Western scholarship quotes complimentary opinions on his reliability.[4] Petersen, who has done considerable work on the growth of early Muslim historical writing, however, warns that al-Wāqidī's Traditional material must "be treated with greater reservation than that of other scholars".[5]

Abūᶜ Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Saᶜd b. Mānī al-Baṣrī al-Hāshimī *kātib* of al-Wāqidī was a *mawla* (client) of the B. Hāshim, his grandfather being a freedman of Ḥusayn b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUbayd Allāh b.ᶜAbbās.[6] Though "as a comparison with the text of Wāqidī's *Maghāzī* shows, Ibn Saᶜd relies above all upon Wāqidī"[7] the *rijāl* critics consider Ibn Saᶜd a "trustworthy authority".[8] As we shall see, however, after providing a comprehensive list of his main transmitters before giving an account of the *maghāzī*, he rarely provides *isnāds* for the individual incidents and events, though there are exceptions such as Badr etc. Therefore, in spite of his general trustworthiness, it is not possible to

[1] *Mizān al-Iᶜtidāl* (Cairo, 1382/1963) Vol. III, p. 663.
[2] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz*. Vol. I, p. 348.
[3] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* trans. by M. de Slane (Repr. Karachi, 1964), Vol. IV, p. 326.
[4] Joseph Horovitz, *IC*, (1928), p. 518 and *EI*(1) Vol. IV, p. 1104-5; Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953), p. 12.
[5] Petersen, p. 83.
[6] *Tahdhīb*, Vol. II, p. 344.
[7] Horovitz, (1928), p. 524.
[8] J.W. Fück, "Ibn Saᶜd," *EI* (2) Vol. III. p. 922.

isolate any one of the accounts with which we are concerned and then to identify the source of his information.

With these three works, all written or collected approximately a century and a half or more after the events under study took place, our earliest record of the remembered past of early Islam comes to a close. What was remembered by our informants the original reporters and transmitters, and above all what was recorded by Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa^{c}d reflects the importance which they attached to the events as preserved. It is their historical consciousness on which we depend. It is definitely not comparable to our sense of history. Details which might have been of interest to us have been lost for ever, for the early observers of that history were not concerned with them. For example Ibn Isḥāq begins his account of the affair of the B. Qaynuqā^{c} with the following words:

> The Apostle assembled them in their market and addressed them as follows : 'O Jews, beware lest God bring upon you the vengeance that he brought upon Quraysh and become Muslims ...[1]

Ibn Isḥāq does not tell us why the Apostle assembled them to give such a warning, though he goes on to say that the B.Qaynuqā^{c} were the first of the Jews to break their agreement with the Apostle and go to war between Badr and Uḥud.[2] What was that agreement, when was it signed and how did the B. Qaynuqā^{c} break it? There is no information. Almost a hundred years later, Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) editing the *Sīrah*, noticed that the account lacked some important information. So he added that a Muslim woman was insulted by the B. Qaynuqā^{c} in their market.[3] Was that the only reason? Was it an act of war? Did it mean the breach of an agreement? We can only conjecture, reconstruct and try to search for the reasons which led the Apostle to assemble the B. Qaynuqā^{c} and administer them such a warning. For Ibn Isḥāq, who never suppresses relevant evidence, this information was not important. If he knew, he did not care to record it; if he did not know, he did not think it was necessary to obtain it. Before giving an account of the battle of Uḥud, Ibn Isḥāq records that the Apostle said, 'kill any Jew that falls into your power'. Thereupon Muḥayyiṣah b. Mas^{c}ūd leapt upon Ibn Sunaynah, a Jewish merchant

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 545.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

with whom they had social and business relations, and killed him.[1] It seems to be a drastic order. Could the Apostle enforce it in the third year of the Hijrah? What was the occasion? And in spite of the language of the order which covered every Jew it seems Ibn Sunaynah was the only unfortunate Jew who fell into Muslim hands. It is obvious that Ibn Isḥāq gave this information without context; some important link is missing. For Ibn Isḥāq that link was not significant, and for us it is impossible to recover. Ibn Isḥāq quotes a conciliatory letter which the Apostle wrote to the Jews of Khaybar[2], but does not tell us who carried the letter, how the messenger transmitting the letter was treated, how the Jews reacted to it, whether they replied, and if they did what their reply was. That information is lost to us.

One may agree with Lord Raglan's conclusion, which he has drawn after careful study, that "any fact about a person which is not placed on record within a hundred years of his death is lost."[3] Add to this the fact that "every incident begins to fade as soon as it has occurred".[4]

Considerable critical work on the authenticity of the *Ḥadīth* literature has been done by Goldziher[5], Margoliouth,[6] Lammens[7], Robson[8] and Schacht[9]. *Al-Ṣaḥīḥain*, the first two collections of authoritative traditions known as "The Six Genuine Ones", the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (194/810-256/870) and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (210/816-261/785), though slightly later, "represent for the first time in the literature a more rigorous criticism

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 553.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 376-7.

[3] Lord Raglan, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* (New York, 1956), p. 13.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[5] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (The original was first published in 1890) trans. by C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern (London, 1971), Vol. II.

[6] D.S. Margoliouth, *The Early Development of Mohammedanism* (London, 1914).

[7] Henri Lammens, *Islam, Beliefs and Institutions*, trans. by Sir E.D. Ross (London, 1929).

[8] James Robson, "Tradition", *The Muslim World*, Vol. XLI, 1957, January, pp. 22-23, April, pp. 98-112 and July, pp. 166-180.

[9] J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1959). A vast literature by Muslim scholars, especially of India and Pakistan, to rebut the criticism of Western scholars, especially that of Schacht, has recently appeared in Urdu. Fuad Sezgin has also done some valuable work. Unfortunately most of these works have not been translated either into Arabic or English.

of the *isnād* than that customary in the preceding period".[1] Both of them had their *shurūṭ* (conditions) and if a Tradition did not comply with those conditions it was not included in their collection. Robson, discussing degrees of authority in Traditions points out that Muslim scholars like Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Naisābūrī put first on their list those which were given by both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim[2]. This, in fact, is a general view not limited to al-Naisābūrī.

But the criticism of the *Ḥadīth* does not apply to the Traditions quoted in this study. Traditions concerning legal and juristic subjects, though they may not always be obvious, have not been used. The Traditions, which might have been fabricated under Umayyad or Abbasid influence are not relevant to our research. Similarly Traditions concerning the Shīᶜī-Sunni differences are suspect and do not concern us. Most of the criticism by classical and Western scholars is aimed at such Traditions. My attitude, therefore, in dealing with the *Ḥadīth* material has been identical to that of Montgomery Watt who says :

> In the legal sphere there may be some sheer invention of traditions, it would seem. But in the historical sphere, in so far as the two may be separated, and apart from some exceptional cases the nearest to such invention in the best early historians appears to be a 'tendential shaping' of material ... in as much as many of the questions in which the historian of the mid-twentieth century is interested are not affected by the process of shaping, there should be little difficulty in obtaining answers to his questions from the sources.[3]

Wherever no motive can be ascribed, or wherever a *Ḥadīth* is not directly involved in a controversy of the subject under study I am inclined to depend more on it than on our three *maghāzī* sources. Guillaume's remarks on the subject are pertinent in this connection :

> A man who laboured sixteen years on the compilation of his corpus, who sought the aid of prayer before committing a tradition to writing and who interrogated over one thousand sheikhs living in places so distant as Balkh, Merv, Nisapur, the principal towns of Mesopotamia, the Hijaz, Egypt, and Syria, deserved well of his co-religionists ... The man Bukhārī has always been immeasurably greater in the popular estimation than Muslim, and the tendency has been for the work of the former to take precedence of the latter. The one is prized for its range over the whole field of *fiqh* and the strictness of the *shurūṭ* or rules for determining the trustworthiness of *rāwīs*, while the other is preferred for its more concise treatment

[1] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, Vol. II, p. 227.
[2] Robson, *The Muslim World*, Vol. XLI, p. 32.
[3] Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1968), p. 13.

of the material. *Together they form an almost unassailable authority, subject indeed to criticism in details . . .*"[1]

My preference for the *Ṣaḥīḥain* is strictly confined to the study of the historical data concerning the Jews during the time of the Apostle. This would not necessarily apply to the discussion of other subjects, particularly to the origin of Shīʿism or controversies emanating from the Umayyad and Abbasid claims and would certainly not apply to *fiqh* questions pertaining to non-Muslims.

The Qurʾān and the five works mentioned above exhaust our primary sources. Besides these sources I have also used the *Sunan* of Abū Dāʾūd and al-Samhūdī's *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ bi Akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafa.*

Abū Dāʾūd (202/817-275/888) was a contemporary of al-Bukhārī and a pupil of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Abū Dāʾūd is less strict with his conditions (*shurūṭ*) and where a favourable verdict has been accorded by a lenient scholar he has "accepted the *Ḥadīth* despite the weight of adverse criticism".[2] This does not mean that he did not exercise proper caution. "He wrote down half a million *Ḥadīth*, from which he selected 4,800; he calls these authentic, those which seem to be authentic, and those which are nearly so".[3]

Nūr al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Samhūdī (844/1440—911/1505)' studied in Cairo under the most renowned man of his time, the Ṣūfī saint al-ʿIrāqī. In 860/1455 he went on pilgrimage and afterwards settled in Medina where he stayed for nearly six years. During this period he made extensive researches on the original state of the Mosque of the Apostle. In 886/1461 he went to pilgrimage and then returned to Egypt where he was admitted to the circle of Sulṭān al-Ashraf Qāʾitbey. He returned to Medina in 890/1485 and remained there till his death. His principal work, which I have used, is *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ bi Akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafa.*[4] This work is the main source of information for the history and the topography of Medina[5].

I have used the two above-mentioned works for supplementary information and supportive evidence but not as independent authorities.

[1] Alfred Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam: An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature* (Oxford, 1924) pp 30-32. The italics are mine.

[2] Guillaume, p. 34.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[4] It was published in Cairo in four volumes in 1955.

[5] See for further details, Ḥajjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn*, Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, Vol. G. II, p. 173 and the editor's introduction to the 1955 edition of *Wafāʾ al-Wafāʾ* mentioned above.

Abū Dā°ūd provides additional information or explanation of events, where our primary sources have been silent or vague. Al-Samhūdī is the earliest source on Medina after Islam. During the course of research other important sources of Muslim history, which were conceived in another tradition and were inspired by different motives, such as Yaḥyā b. Ādam's *Kitāb al-Kharāj* and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* have also been sifted for relevant material. The main facts or arguments, however, do not depend either on them or on al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa°d, and the present study would still stand if references to these works were omitted.

Lord Acton once observed that when an interesting statement is discovered, the critical method "begins by suspecting it"; the historian's basic duty "is not the art of accumulating material, but the sublimer art of investigating it—of discerning truth from falsehood". The punishment of the B. Qurayẓah is unique in the life of the Apostle. The total number of men reported to be executed on surrender is said to be six hundred to nine hundred, while the total number of Muslims and non-Muslims killed during all the battles and expeditions which were undertaken during the Apostle's lifetime is less than five hundred killed on both sides—the number of non-Muslims killed is less than three hundred. "This dark episode, which Muslim tradition, it must be said, takes quite calmly, has provoked lively discussion among Western biographers of Muḥammad, with caustic accusations on the one hand and legalistic excuses on the other".[1] But in this lively discussion both sides seem to have paid little attention to critical examination of the evidence. The Western scholar quoted Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa°d and the Muslim apologist answered back with Deuteronomy[2] and 2 Samuel[3].

Stories of massacres and mass murders have a way of impressing themselves on man's imagination. Once circulated it is difficult to remove them from the collective memory of people. Even when historically demolished they become part of popular legend. George W. Hartman in the *Journal of Social Psychology*[4] has analysed the

[1] Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam* trans. by Virginia Luling and Rosamund Linell, (London, 1968), p. 73.

[2] Deuteronomy 20, 13-14, quoted by Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet* (Lahore, 1924), p. 163.

[3] 2 Samuel XII, 31, quoted by Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (London, 1964), p. 82.

[4] Vol. XXII, November 1945, pp. 221-236.

emotional factors which lead to the continued acceptance of such myths in the absence of any substantial and trustworthy evidence.

Of all historical 'facts', stories of massacres and mass executions and murders are most susceptible to doubt and the most likely to prove either pure fabrications or high exaggerations. Ibn Isḥāq and to a lesser degree, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa^{c}d and their predecessor al-Zuhrī and Mūsa b. ^{c}Uqbah remembered, noted and reproduced what they considered to be significant facts. Events and details which are significant from our point of view were probably not of any consequence to them[1]. They were not of any importance to the Jews either. There were no Jewish historians and writers, no correspondents, no travellers who carried the tales of the misfortunes of the Jews of the Ḥijāz when these tragic events were taking place. It is improbable and difficult, however, to believe that in the second and third centuries of Islam when Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Sa^{c}d were collecting their material, the learned rabbis of the Gaonate and the Exilarchate of Babylon were unable to obtain the Jewish version of the events which had a profound influence on the life of the Jewish community of the Ḥijāz at the time of the Apostle. It is not normal with the Jews not to record their misfortunes. The Jews of Khaybar reported to be expelled by ^{c}Umar were settled in Kufa, which was not very far from the Gaonate.[2] They were the descendants of the B. al-Naḍīr and the children of the B. Qurayẓah; Jewish scholars could gather their material from them. Samuel Usque's book *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel—Third Dialogue*[3] is a sixteenth-century classic of Jewish martyrology. This "deft painter of Jewish suffering", who "caused the long procession of Jewish history to file past the tearful eyes of his contemporaries, in all its sublime glory and abysmal tragedy"[4] reports neither the expulsion of the B. Qaynuqā^{c} and the B. al-Naḍīr nor the execution of the B. Qurayẓah. Jewish history up to Geiger's time (1833) seems to be free of these stories.

The Jews lost their dominant position in Yathrib and Khaybar because they could not adapt like the Quraysh of Mecca although the terms offered to them were different and far less stringent than those to the Quraysh and other pagan Arabs.

[1] See *supra*, pp. 19 and 20 for examples.
[2] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 85; Baron, Vol. III, p. 89.
[3] Samuel Usque, *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel—Third Dialogue*, translated by Gershon I. Gelbart (New York, 1964).
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

CHAPTER I

THE JEWS OF ARABIA ON THE EVE OF THE *HIJRAH*

> By slow infiltration several Arab tribes drifted into Medina and its vicinity, and were hospitably received by the Jewish farmers. By the sixth century, these new arrivals, steadily reinforced from the south and unified under an able leader, Malik ibn Ajlan, eventually prevailed over their hosts. Nevertheless, Mohammed still found vigorous Jewish tribes in and around that centre of northern Arabia, possibly constituting the majority of the settled population.
>
> —SALO WITTMAYER BARON

The beginnings of the Jewish settlements in the Arab peninsula are "buried in misty tradition".[1] There is no reliable historical evidence to establish the approximate date of their arrival. Taymā' was known to the Prophets and may be said to have been the first city in Arabia in which something like a Jewish community had existed in ancient biblical times.[2] Seafaring Israelites and Jewish fugitives escaping from persecution by Nebuchadnezzar and later by the Romans, had, it seems, established their colonies in the Arabian peninsula. In southern Arabia (Yemen) they were scattered and "lived without social or political cohesion".[3] Towards the beginning of the fifth century they had, however, established themselves by their industry and enterprising spirit. They obtained so great an influence over the Arab tribes of Yemen that one of the kings of Ḥimyār, Dhū Nuwās, embraced Judaism and assumed the name of Yūsuf.[4]

[1] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 54.
[2] Isaiah 21: 24, Jeremiah 25: 23 and Job 6:19.
[3] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 56.
[4] See Irfan Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najrân: New Documents*, (Bruxelles, 1971), pp. 260-68 for his background and "the bewildering variety of names" which he adopted.

The Arab legends trace the first Jewish settlers in the Ḥijāz to the time of Moses who had ordered some of his followers to fight the Amalek, a people of Edomite stock and described by Rabbinic literature as "Israel's permanent arch-enemy".[1] According to Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (284/897-356/967) these Jews were sent to destroy the Amalek in the Ḥijāz. But they failed to fulfil the commandment of total annihilation; they took pity on the handsome son of the Amalek king and took him back alive instead of killing him. As a punishment these Jews were banished and they settled in Yathrib, which they had earlier conquered. Among those who settled were the Jews of the B. Qurayẓah, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qaynuqāᶜ.[2] Though there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this legend the historical evidence takes us only to the first century A.D. The tombstone inscriptions of a Shubeit "Yehudaya" erected in al-Hijr in 42 A.D. (or 45 B.C.) and that of one Simon in 307 (which incidentally is the latest Nabatean inscription yet discovered) are some of the few remnants of Arab-Jewish life in pre-Islamic Arabia. Werner Caskel, referring to these two inscriptions, considers the Jews to be the main representatives of Nabatean culture in the Ḥijāz after 300 A.D. and declares :

> These are the beginnings of the Jewish population, which later occupied all the oases in the northwest including Medinah.[3]

Yathrib, an oasis on the caravan route running from north to south, rich in underground water supplies, springs and fountains, provided the Jews with a land where they could apply their farming experience. They planted it with palms, fruit trees and rice, and

> seem to have pioneered in introducing advanced methods of irrigation and cultivation of the soil. They also developed new arts and crafts from metal work to dyeing and the production of fine jewellery, and taught the neighbouring tribes more advanced methods of exchanging goods and money.[4]

Though distinguished from the Arabs by their religion, these Jews became Arabicised to such an extent that their tribes adopted Arabic

[1] "Amalek", *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, 1965, pp. 27-8.
[2] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo: Ministry of Culture and Education, n.d.), Vol. III, p. 116. *Ibid.*, (Beirut, 1960), Vol. XXII, pp. 97-107. Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, pp. 154-165.
[3] Werner Caskel, "The Bedouinization of Arabia", *Studies in Islamic Cultural History*, G.E. von Grunebaum, ed. (Wisconsin, 1954), p. 43.
[4] Baron, Vol. III, p. 70.

names. Banū Zaᶜūra seems to be the only exception. "Jewish names such as ᶜĀdiya, Samauᵓal, Sara are comparatively rare".[1] The proportion in which the Arab element was mixed with the Jews is difficult to determine, but probably purely Arab tribes had embraced Judaism.[2] Graetz observes :

> Intermarriage between the two nations tended to heighten the similarity of their characters. Like the Himyarites, the Jews of southern Arabia applied themselves more particularly to the trade between India, the Byzantine empire and Persia. The Jews of northern Arabia, on the contrary, led the life of Bedouins; they occupied themselves with agriculture, cattle breeding, transport of caravan traffic in weapons, and probably also the calling of robbers.[3]

Graetz' view that the Jews of northern Arabia did not take part in trade seems to be based on the silence of Jewish sources on the subject. But Yathrib was on the caravan route, and it is improbable that the rich Jews of the region with their agricultural produce, their jewellery and arms industry, and—above all—capital would not trade with Syria. Wolfenson has referred to the possibility of wide trading contacts between the Jews of Yathrib and the Christian tribes of Ghassān, the Syrian auxiliaries of the Byzantine Empire.[4] Shaban concurs with the view and observes :

> In the light of close connections between the Medinan Jews and other Jewish communities in Arabia it is not unreasonable to suggest that a Jewish trade network existed there at the time.[5]

He further points out that

> These connections extended as far north as with Adhraᶜāt in Syria, and at least as far as Najrān in the south.[6]

The Jews of Arabia, as Graetz observes, enjoyed complete liberty. They concluded offensive and defensive alliances and carried on feuds.

[1] Horovitz, *Islamic Culture*, Vol. III (1929), p. 187.
[2] Ibn Wāḍih al-Yaᶜqūbī, *Taᵓrīkh*, ed. by M. Th. Houtsma (Leiden, 1883), Vol. I, pp. 49-52.
[3] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 57.
[4] Wolfenson, *Taᵓrīkh al-Yahūd fī Bilād al-ᶜArab*, p. 60.
[5] M.A. Shaban, *Islamic History A. D.* 600-750 (*A.H.* 132) : *A New Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 10.
[6] *Ibid.*

Here they were not shut out from the paths of honour, nor excluded from the privileges of the state, but, untrammelled, were allowed to develop their powers in the midst of a free, simple and talented people, to show their manly courage, to compete for the gifts of fame, and with practised hand to measure swords with their antagonists. Instead of bearing the yoke, the Jews were not infrequently the leaders of the Arabian tribes.[1]

The Jews of the Ḥijāz, unlike other Jewish communities, did not seem to interest themselves in literary or scholarly pursuits. The authenticity of their poetical remains has been questioned by Margoliouth and others.[2] Al-Samaw'al is but a legend and Ka'b b. al-Ashraf was the son of an Arab, though "he behaved as if he belonged to his mother's clan of al-Naḍīr".[3] Baron admits:

Arabian Jewry's intellectual equipment seem to have been limited to some scrolls of law, Hebrew prayer books, and other paraphernalia of worship and study, while the availability at that time of more than fragmentary Arabic translations from Scripture is extremely dubious.[4]

The knowledge of the Bible which the Arabian Jews possessed, according to Graetz,

...was not considerable. They were acquainted with it only through the medium of the Agadic exegesis, which had become familiar to them in their travels or had been brought to them by immigrants. For them the glorious history of the past coalesced so completely with the Agadic additions that they were no longer able to separate the gold from the dross.[5]

They maintained trade contacts with the Jews of Syria[6] and religious ties with Babylon[7], "but they had few intellectual contacts with the centres of Jewish life" in these two places.[8] In the absence of any historical evidence it is difficult to agree with the romantic claim of Baron that

during the few generations of Jewish control the focal northern areas were raised

[1] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 53.
[2] See D.S. Margoliouth, *The Relations between Arabs and Israelites Prior to the Rise of Islam* (London, 1924) and Horovitz, *Islamic Culture*, III, pp. 188-90.
[3] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 210.
[4] Baron, Vol. III, p. 261.
[5] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 59.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59, and *supra*, p. 27.
[7] *Infra*, p. 30.
[8] Baron, Vol. III, p. 72.

almost to the high level of the southern civilization, which had long earned for Himyar and its vicinity the Roman designation of *Arabia Felix*.[1]

In fact the Jews of Arabia "contributed little or nothing to the religious and cultural development of post-biblical Judaism".[2] As Margoliouth points out they do not "appear to have produced any man whose name was worth preserving".[3]

More than twenty Jewish tribes were settled in Medina.[4] Prominent among these were the Banū Qurayẓah, the Banū al-Naḍīr, the Banū Qaynuqāᶜ, the Banū Thaᶜlabah and the Banū Hadl. The Banū al-Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayẓah claimed to be the descendants of Jewish priests, *'al-Kāhinūn'*, *Kāhin* being the Arabic rendering of Hebrew *Kohen*. Al-Yaᶜqūbī, who does not give the source of his information, however, says :

> The Banū al-Naḍīr were a subtribe of the Banū Judham, who embraced Judaism. The Banū Qurayẓah were brothers of the Banū al-Naḍīr and it is said that they embraced Judaism in the days of ᶜĀdiyah the son of Samauᵓal.[5]

According to Al-Yaᶜqūbī, the Banū al-Naḍīr and the Banū Qurayẓah had taken their names after the hills on which they first settled. Margoliouth does not consider them Jews, and is inclined "to regard the term of Judaism applied to these Medinese tribes as indicating some form of monotheism"[6]. Reissner also does not consider them 'Jews'. He says :

> Less than a hundred years prior to Muhammad's birth, the Talmud had been completed in Babylon. At that time, there was complete agreement, *intra muros et extra*, as to who was a Jew and what constituted the essence of Judaism. A Jew was a follower of the Mosaic Law as interpreted by the teachers of the Law in accordance with principles laid down in the Talmud... whoever did not conform ...was discounted. If he was Israelitic by descent, he could not be deprived of his birthright, viz, to be called Ben Israel, as in Arabia ...[7]

Friedlaender does not agree with Graetz and Reissner. Working on

[1] Baron, Vol. III, p. 71.
[2] Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad*, p. 42.
[3] Margoliouth, *Relations*, p. 71.
[4] Al-Samhūdī, p. 165.
[5] Al-Yaᶜqūbī, pp. 49-52.
[6] Margoliouth, *Relations*, p. 71.
[7] H.G. Reissner, 'The Ummi Prophet and the Banu Israil", *The Muslim World*, Vol. XXXIX (1949), p. 278, cf. S. D. Goitein, "Banū Isrāᵓīl", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), Vol. I, para. 2 of p. 1022.

Gaonate documents he established the contact of Arab Jews with the Gaonate in Babylon. He observes :

It is characteristic of the central position of the Gaonate in Jewish life that even in its last representatives it was able to exert its influence over the distant half-mythical Jews in free Arabia and shape their professional and civil life. It shows at the same time that the Arabian Jews, however far removed from the centre of Jewish learning, recognized the authority of the Talmud and were not in any way guilty of those anti-Talmudic sentiments which Graetz is prone to ascribe to their forefathers.[1]

The Banū Qurayẓah and the Banū al-Naḍīr called themselves *Kāhinūn* and so presumably claimed to be of the house of Aaron.[2] The Banū Qaynuqā°—who practised crafts such as that of the goldsmith—manufactured arms and conducted a market and were possibly "north Arab, Idumaean or such like"[3]. They possessed no agricultural lands, but had a compact settlement in the suburbs of Medina.[4] The Banū Qurayẓah and the Banū al-Naḍīr were the owners of some of the richest lands towards the south of Medina on higher ground. Other Jewish clans were dispersed. In total the Jewish clans of Medina owned almost sixty *āṭām*.[5] These *āṭām*, (singular, *uṭum*) which formed a prominent feature of Yathrib, were in fact forts stocked with provisions, provided with water, strong enough to withstand attacks and big enough to stand long sieges. There were schools and synagogues and council halls.

The second most important settlement of the Jews was Khaybar. Approximately ninety miles from Yathrib, it is located on a very high mountainous plateau entirely composed of lava deposits and covered by malarial swamps. The valleys, though uninhabitable, are very fertile. The Jews cultivated grapes, vegetables and grain, and raised sheep, cattle, camels, horses and donkeys. They also had palm groves. They traded with Syria and benefited from the caravan trade between Arabia, Syria and Iraq. They also manufactured metal implements such as battering rams and catapults.[6] They owned several groups

[1] Israel Friedlaender, "The Jews of Arabia and the Gaonate", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. I, 1910-11, p. 252.

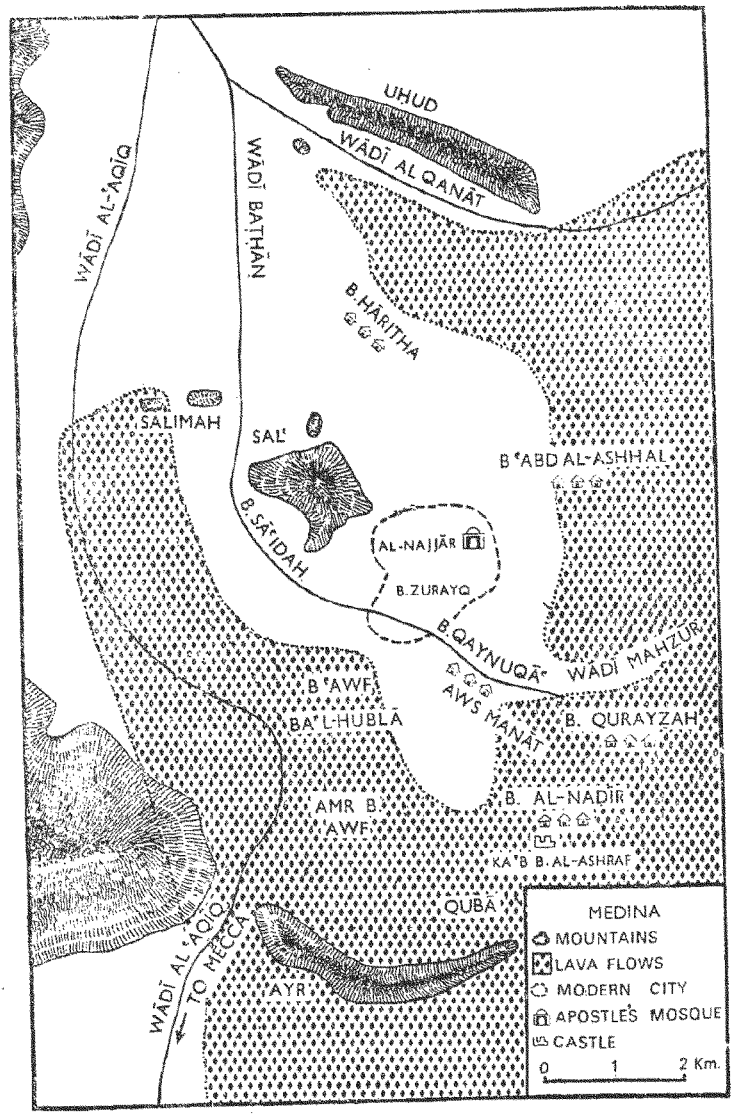
[2] De Lacy O'Leary, *Arabia Before Muhammad* (London, 1927), p. 173. See the Apostle's reference to his Jewish wife Ṣafiyah's ancestry going back to Aaron, *Tirmidhī* (Lahore, 1963), Vol. II, p. 727, cf. al-Ya°qūbī, *supra* p. 27.

[3] O'Leary, p. 173.

[4] Saleh Ahmad Al-Ali, "Studies in the Topography of Medina", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, April 1961, pp. 71-72.

[5] Al-Samhūdī, I, p. 116.

[6] Joseph Braslavi, "Khaibar", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. X, Column 942.



Medina in the First Year of the *Hijrah*

of forts, many built on the tops of hills in virtually impregnable positions. According to al-Yaʿqūbī twenty thousand fighters lived in these forts.[1] Fadak, Wādī al-Qura and Taymāʾ were the other three Jewish strongholds.

Torrey's thesis that there were Jews in Mecca at the time of the Apostle[2] is, however, without foundation. Al-Azraqī makes no mention of any Jewish settlement in Mecca, but refers to their reverence for Kaʿbah; they took their shoes off when they reached the boundaries of the sanctuary.[3] As Lammens remarks, the fact that the Quraysh sent a delegation to Medina to consult the Jews regarding the Apostle's claims proves there were no Jews in Mecca whom they could consult.[4]

When Banū Qaylah arrived in Yathrib from the south, they were presumably allowed by the Jews to settle on those lands in and around Yathrib which had not yet been brought under cultivation. Divided into the Aws and the Khazraj and further sub-divided into clans they accepted the dominant position of the Jews and entered into a relationship with them which was that of *jiwār* (neighbour) or *ḥilf* (confederation). *Ḥilf* is a compact between quite separate tribes, general in scope, made for the object of establishing a permanent state of peace between the tribes. It did not diminish their autonomy, but united them for purposes of common defence, for mutual payment of settlements to third parties, for vengeance, and for the common use of pasturage.[5]

Towards the middle of the sixth century the situation changed, largely owing to Mālik b. al-ʿAjlān's revolt against the Jewish prince al-Fiṭyawn of the Zuḥra tribe who as a mark of Khazraj subordination exercised the *jus primae noctis* with a bride from that tribe.[6] Mālik

[1] Al-Yaʿqūbī (Beirut, 1960), II, p. 56.

[2] Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, second and third lectures, pp. 28-104.

[3] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makkah* (Mecca, 1965), Vol. II, p. 131.

[4] H. Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale avant L'Hégire* (Beyrouth, 1928), p. 51.

[5] W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (First published in 1903, Boston, n.d.), pp. 53-57, E. Tyan; "Ḥilf", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), Vol. III, pp. 388-89.

[6] Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, p. 178. F. Krenkow (*EI*[1], Vol. II, p. 938) read the name of the Jewish prince as al-Qāytūn and considered it as fictitious since it is originally Greek. Al-Samhūdī, however, has clearly stated that the name begins with *"fi"*. Watt (*Muhammad at Medina*, p. 193), who has not given his source, also gives the name as Fiṭyawn and says he belonged to the B. Thaʿlabah.

b. al-ʿAjlān belonged to the Khazraj, but both the Aws and the Khazraj bowed to his leadership. Mālik became independent and it is probable that with him nearly all the Khazraj and most of the Aws freed themselves from the 'Jewish' over-lordship.[1] Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 309/911) reports that the *Marzubān al-bādiyah* appointed an *ʿāmil* over Medina who collected taxes. The B. Qurayẓah and the B. al-Naḍīr, the report continues, were kings who were appointed to collect these taxes from the Aws and the Khazraj.[2] Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) also reports that the B. Qurayẓah and the B. al-Naḍīr were the kings driven out by the Aws and the Khazraj, who had formerly paid tax to the Jews.[3] Altheim and Stiehl consider Ibn Khurradādhbih's report sound, and observe that such a situation could endure as long as the Jewish tribes dominated the Aws and the Khazraj, till the middle of the sixth century.[4] It is probably safer to assume that the Jews of Medina had lost their position as a dominant group sometime before the birth of the Apostle.

Various developments after the middle of the sixth century tended to weaken the Jewish community of Yathrib. The fact that before the battle of Buʿāth, the Banū al-Naḍīr and Banū Qurayẓah had given hostages to the Khazraj suggests that they were fully conscious of their weakness. But at the battle of Buʿāth both the tribes helped the Aws against the Khazraj even at the cost of the lives of some of their hostages. This help made it possible for the Aws to gain victory at Buʿāth, which was fought a few years before the *Hijrah*.[5]

By the first quarter of the seventh century the Banū Qaylah were, probably, on the way to becoming a dominant group in Yathrib. Yathrib at this time was not much of a city. It was a disorganised collection of hamlets and houses, farms and fortified huts scattered over an oasis, rich in underground water supplies and springs and fountains. Though the Aws seemed to have the upper hand, relations between the different groups had reached a very low ebb. They were divided, and unimportant quarrels assumed dangerous proportions.

[1] Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, pp. 177-98. See also Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 192-95.
[2] Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, ed. by de Goeje (Leiden, 1889), p. 128.
[3] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, ed. by F. Wüstenfeld (6 Vols., Leipzig, 1866-1873), Vol. IV, p. 460.
[4] F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *Finanzgeschichte der Spätantike* (Frankfurt am Main, 1957), p. 149, n. 63.
[5] Ibn Hishām, pp. 372-73; *Al-Aghānī*, Vol. XVII, pp. 68-75.

The balance established by the battle of Bu^{c}āth was tenuous and there was every danger that war might break out again. It was in this atmosphere of chaos, suspicion and lawlessness that the Aws and the Khazraj tried to unite under ^{c}Abd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salul al-^{c}Awfī of the clan of the Banū al-Ḥublā.[1]

For the Jews, however, Yathrib had become the centre of a region which Lammens calls a *petite patrie* ruled by Talmudic Law.[2] Compact and flourishing Jewish communities occupied Fadak, Wādī al-Qura, Taymā$^{\circ}$ and Khaybar.

An examination of both the Arab sources and the results of modern research indicates that the Jews of Arabia were not an isolated people. Irfan Shahid, who is the latest among the scholars who have worked on this period, considers that the relations of the Yathrib Jews with Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās "must have been very close indeed".[3] They had incited him to make war against Najrān.[4] The ruler of Ḥīrah Mundhir III (505-553) had a contingent of Jews in his army and his son Mundhir IV (580-583) married a Jewess, Salmah bint al-Sā$^{\circ}$igh, the mother of the last of the Lakhmids, the famous Nu^{c}mān III[5] (592-604).

This was the state of affairs when Islam brought the hope of a new way of life to the quarrelling sons of the Banū Qaylah. Six men of the Khazraj were the first definite converts, who went to Mecca most probably in 620. A year later, five of them returned with four others from the Khazraj and three from the Aws. They pledged themselves solemnly to the Apostle. In June 622 seventy-three men and two women went to Mecca for pilgrimage and on that occasion secretly by night took the pledge not only to obey the Apostle but to fight for him. Ka^{c}b b. Mālik, who was present on this occasion has described the significance of that pledge in simple words :

> The Apostle spoke and recited the Qur$^{\circ}$ān and invited men to Allah and commended Islam and then said: 'I invite your allegiance on the basis that you protect me as you protect your women and children'. Al-Barā$^{\circ}$ took his hand and said 'By Him Who sent you with the truth we shall protect you as we protect our women. We give our allegiance and we are men of war possessing arms which have been passed on from father to son'. While Al-Barā$^{\circ}$ was speaking Abū al-Haytham

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 411.
[2] H. Lammens, p. 53.
[3] Irfan Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najrān*, p. 268.
[4] Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta$^{\circ}$rikh*, p. 113, cited by Irfan Shahid, p. 268.
[5] Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, IV, p. 377, cited by Irfan Shahid, p. 272.

b. al-Tayyihān interrupted him and said, 'O Apostle, we have ties with other men (meaning the Jews), and if we sever them perhaps when we have done that and Allah will have given you victory, you will return to your people and leave us'. The Apostle smiled and said: 'No, your blood is my blood and what is sacred to you is sacred to me. I will fight against them that fight against you and be at peace with those who are at peace with you.[1]

The precise nature of the Apostle's agreement with the Muslims of Medina before he left Mecca is not clear. But two things would seem to be certain, some pledge of war must have been involved, and the Jews of Medina were not a party to any agreement before the *Hijrah*. It is not known exactly what the terms of that pledge were. Before leaving Medina to meet the Quraysh at Badr the Apostle asked for advice. He said 'Give me advice, O Men! Ibn Isḥāq says by this he meant the *Anṣār*.

This is because they were in the majority, and because when they took the oath of fealty at al-ʿAqabah they stipulated that they were not responsible for his safety until he entered their territory, and that when he was there they would protect him as they did their wives and children. So the Apostle was afraid that the *Anṣār* would not feel it incumbent upon them to go with him against an enemy outside their territory. When he spoke these words Saʿd b. Muʿādh said, 'Perhaps you refer to us', and when the Apostle said 'Yes', Saʿd replied, 'We believe in you, we declare your truth, and we witness that what you have brought is the truth, and we have given you our word and agreement to hear and obey. We now stand by you, whatever you ask us to do.[2]

The Battle of Badr took place towards the later part of the second year of the *Hijrah*. It is, therefore, significant to note that neither the Apostle nor Saʿd b. Muʿādh even obliquely refer to the document called the *Ṣaḥīfah*. Had it been signed immediately after the arrival of the Apostle in Medina or even during the first two years of his stay, a reference would not have been made to a penultimate and obviously obsolete agreement reached at al-ʿAqabah.

As regards the Jews, our sources are contradictory and vague. It is not at all clear if there was a formal agreement with the Jews at all. Ibn Isḥāq reports that, when the Apostle reminded the Jews of the condition imposed on them, the Jews—probably the B. al-Naḍīr—said, "No covenant was ever made with us about Muhammad"[3]. This incident is reported before the B. Qaynuqāʿ came into conflict

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 296-97.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 434-35.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

with the Muslims. Since there is no definite information about any agreement with the Jews, the relationship between the Muslims and the Jews in Medina rested on some sort of *status quo*. To be more precise, it seemed to be an uneasy truce which lasted till the *Ṣaḥīfah* was signed.

Historians dealing with the pre-Islamic alliances among the tribes might reasonably ask if the Jews of Medina became an unwitting victim of clannish jealousies or complexities of inter-tribal alliances. As our examination of the incidents shows, such alliances played no part in the Jewish-Muslim conflict. The Jewish trust in the *munāfiqūn*, however, played a far more important role in their misfortunes[1]. From the very first executions of Abū ʿAfak of the B. ʿAmr b. ʿAwf and ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān of Umayyah b. Zayd, the Apostle had taken care to emphasise that Islam had terminated tribal alliances. It would not be correct to conclude that tribal affiliations did not play an important role in the Arab dealings with the Apostle, but they had no part—or no significant part—in the steep decline of the Jewish influence in the Ḥijāz during the first ten years of their encounter with Islam.

[1] See *infra*, Chapter III. While the B. al-Naḍīr were ready to comply with the terms offered by the Apostle it was ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy and others who asked them to resist the Apostle.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE OF THE *ṢAḤĪFAH*

> ...the concept of the *ummah* as a political confederation of tribes and clans, including non-Muslims, Jewish ones, had inevitably to yield to Muhammad's original understanding of a body whose foundation may be ethnic but whose reason for being is shaped by the divine purpose of salvation. The Jews were such an *ummah*, and in Medina they were more than just a historical and literary illustration of a theological point; they were a political reality.
>
> —F. E. PETERS

Yathrib, as we have seen in the previous chapter, presented a picture of political chaos at the time of the Apostle's arrival. Though no formal peace was made after the Battle of Bu^{c}āth (about 615 A.D.), the feuding clans and their allies were too exhausted to continue an active struggle. In this uneasy state of political vacuum the Jews enjoyed a position of considerable influence. ^{c}Amr b. al-Nu^{c}mān and al-Ḥuḍayr b. Simāk, who died in the battle of Bu^{c}āth, did not have the qualities of leaders who could unite a people in the existing state of affairs in Yathrib, which to say the least "was intolerable".[1] But "there were opportunities for a strong man to gain control over a large section of Medina, perhaps, even over the whole".[2] ^{c}Abd Allāh b. Ubayy, as we have seen earlier, seemed to be a man of wider vision. If the Apostle had not arrived at Medina, he might have provided that leadership which Medina so badly needed.

The situation not only offered a challenge to the Apostle, but also several solutions. He could have worked for a full political integration on the basis of religion, which the ruling *Zeitgeist* seemed to have demanded. This would have meant the exclusion of the Jews,

[1] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 173.
[2] *Ibid.*

assigning them a subordinate status with no participation in the life of the Muslim society. He could have united the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*, who had accepted him as their religious leader into one political group. But it seems at this stage he decided against such a grouping and tried to establish a security-community in which there could be reasonable assurance that its members would not fight each other physically but would settle their disputes by peaceful means. The Apostle's attempts to create such a community culminated in a document which is called the *Ṣaḥīfah*.[1] An examination of this document, which was signed in Yathrib between the Muslims from the Quraysh, the various clans of the *Anṣār* and the Jews, shows that it was based on a liberal conception of the rule of law with two simple principles: the safeguarding of individual rights by impartial judicial authority,[2] and the principle of equality before the law.[3]

The Arabs of the *Jāhilīyah* had practically nothing that can be described as positive law. It is common knowledge and therefore needs hardly any proof that the modern sanction of the law, i.e., a fine or imprisonment for the offender, did not exist. No society is, however, absolutely lawless and the Arab tribes maintained security by the solidarity of the tribal group. If a member of the group was killed, other members of the group avenged him; if a member of the group was in danger, he was supported by other members of the tribe irrespective of the right or wrong of the matter in dispute. The working of the *lex talionis* was, however, modified by the acceptance of *weregeld* as an alternative. But the system could work only by the solidarity and strength of the kinship group, and by a swift and effective way of settling disputes and paying *weregeld*. Thus the *lex talionis* restrained wanton killing and became an important feature of pre-Islamic Arab society.

The *Ṣaḥīfah* sought to provide the basis of positive law. The object of the document was limited to the resolution of conflict without violence. The community thus created is called the *ummah*. The *ummah*, is specifically a Qur'ānic term. It occurs nine times in the Meccan and forty-seven times in the Medinan *sūrahs*. It describes the totality of individuals bound to one another, irrespective of their

[1] See below for further discussion of the document.
[2] Article 23 of the *Ṣaḥīfah*, see below.
[3] Articles 26-35 of the *Ṣaḥīfah*, see below.

colour, race or social status, by the doctrine of submission to one God. According to Montgomery Watt, it is "the community formed by those who accept the messenger and his message".[1] Rudi Paret has also reached a similar conclusion and says the word "always refers to ethical, linguistic or religious bodies of people who are the objects of the divine plan of salvation".[2] While the orientalists differ as regards the development of the term in the Qur'ān, some Muslim scholars assert that the term *ummah* describes the community of Muslims,[3] but this is only partly true. It describes the *de facto* position. In theory the use of the term *ummah* during the major portion of the Apostle's career was not restricted to Muslims alone. The main difficulty in dealing with the history of ideas is that terms are more permanent than their definitions. While institutions continually change, the terms describing them remain unaltered. A precise and comprehensive definition of the *ummah* is, however, not required for our purpose. The term *ummah*, therefore, within the context of our discussion is restricted to the sense in which it has been used in the *Ṣaḥīfah* i.e. 'the people of the *Ṣaḥīfah*.'

The *Ṣaḥīfah* signed by the Muslims and the Jews, and erroneously called 'The Constitution of Medina', is a very important document for the understanding of the status of non-Muslims in a Muslim-dominated society. Scholars of all schools of thought, such as Watt, Serjeant and Hamidullah,[4] agree that the document is "unquestionably authentic".[5]

No later falsifier writing under the Umayyads or Abbasids, would have included non-Muslims in the *ummah*, would have retained the articles against the Quraysh, and would have given Muḥammad so insignificant a place.[6]

Most of the modern scholars dispute the date and unity of the document and there is no clear indication as to the number of agreements which constitute it. Various dates for signing these documents can only be assigned after some reasonable method is found to separate

[1] W. Montgomery Watt, 'Ideal Factors in the Origin of Islam' *The Islamic Quarterly*, II, No. 3 (October 1955), pp. 161-174. See also his book, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 1968), pp. 9-14.

[2] Article '*Ummah*', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, First Edition.

[3] Abul A'lā Maudūdī, *Islamic Way of Life* (Delhi, 1967), p. 17.

[4] Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World*, (Lahore, 1968), pp. 38-40.

[5] R.B. Serjeant, "The Constitution of Medina", *The Islamic Quarterly*, VIII (January-June 1964), p. 3.

[6] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 225.

the individual agreements. There are, however, certain clear indications as to the possible dates, which are significant in determining the character of the *ummah*. Ibn Isḥāq assigns it to the first year of the *Hijrah*. But textual comparison of the chronological material in the *Sīrah* shows that the various biographers differ even on the dating of important events.[1] The *Ṣaḥīfah* itself, however, provides indications of its approximate date, which, even though obvious, have been ignored by historians.

Firstly, there is no mention of the B. Qaynuqāᶜ, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah in the *Ṣaḥīfah*. While most of the Muslim historians have not paid any attention to the omission of these three important Jewish clans from the *Ṣaḥīfah*, some orientalists have tried to explain it away by remarking that the Apostle "grouped the Jews according to the Arab clans in whose districts they lived".[2] This explanation is obviously not convincing. The Jews of the Banū ᶜAwf, the Banū al-Najjār, the Banū al-Ḥārith, the Banū Sāᶜidah, the Banū Jusham, the Banū Thaᶜlabah and even a subdivision of the Banū Thaᶜlabah, Jafnah, were all confederates of the Khazraj and have been mentioned as such. If this formula was sufficient to cover the Banū Qaynuqāᶜ who were the allies of the Khazraj, then the name of their patrons Baᶜl-Ḥublā or B. Sālim should have been mentioned. As Wellhausen observes, unless the Jews of the Banū al-Aws and Thaᶜlabah are the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah, these two tribes did not enter into any agreement with Muhammad at the beginning, A.H. 2.[3] But the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah were not the *mawālī* of al-Aws. Their relationship was that of alliance and not of patronage[4]. The simple explanation is that the document was signed after the expulsion of the B. Qurayẓah. Montgomery Watt finds difficulty in this explanation because the *Ṣaḥīfah* pays that much attention "to Jewish affairs at a time when there were few Jews in Medina".[5] The assumption, however, is not supported by facts. After the two Jewish clans, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah, were expelled from Medina the following Jewish tribes still remained there :

[1] Caetani, *Annali dell' Islam*, Vol. I, p. 466; J.M.B. Jones, 'The Chronology of the Maghāzī—a Textual Survey', *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XIX (1957), pp. 245-280.

[2] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 226.

[3] J. Wellhausen, *Skizzen u. Vorarbeiten* (Berlin, 1889) 4. Heft, p. 75.

[4] *Supra*, Chapter I, p. 60.

[5] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 227.

1. The Jews of Banū ᶜAwf,
2. The Jews of Banū al-Najjār,
3. The Jews of Banū Sāᶜidah,
4. The Jews of Banū Jusham,
5. The Jews of Banū al-Aws,
6. The Jews of Banū Thaᶜlabah,
7. Banū al-Shuṭaybah,
8. The Jews of Banū Zurayq,
9. The Jews of B. Ḥārithah,
10. The Banū Qaynuqāᶜ.[1]

The names of the first seven Jewish tribes are given in the *Ṣaḥīfah*; the names of the B. Zurayq and the B. Ḥārithah are given by Ibn Isḥāq in the list of the Jewish opponents of the Apostle.[2] Our sources do not indicate that there was any general exodus of the Jews during the Apostle's life. Watt rightly concludes that "the document in its final form was intended as a charter for the Jews remaining in Medina".[3] Though the remaining Jews of Medina had lost their "news-value" for the Muslim historian, there are references to their presence in Medina after the expulsion of the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah. Ibn Saᶜd reports that the Apostle's expedition to Khaybar was very painful to the Jews who remained in Medina.[4] The Jews were even politically active and continued to offer opposition to the Apostle. When the Apostle ordered the Muslims to prepare for an expedition against the Byzantines (9/630) at Tabūk the disaffected and the waverers assembled in the house of a Jew, Suwaylim, making plans to encourage disaffection. Suwaylim was not punished personally but the Apostle ordered Ṭalḥah b. ᶜUbayd Allāh to burn his house to the ground.[5]

The presence of the Jews in Medina after the expulsion of their three clans seems to be supported by the Qurᵓān as well. There is general consensus that *Al-Māᵓidah* is the last *sūrah* which was revealed to the Apostle. ᶜAṣmāᵓ, daughter of Yazīd reported that the whole of this *sūrah* was revealed together.[6] There are other reports also to

[1] As we shall see in the next chapter, the evidence seems to indicate that the B. Qaynuqāᶜ were not expelled during the Apostle's lifetime.
[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 351.
[3] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 227.
[4] Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 106.
[5] Ibn Hishām, p. 858.
[6] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurᵓān al-ᶜAẓīm*, (Cairo, n.d.), Vol. II, p. 2.

the same effect. Nöldeke, while accepting it as the last revelation—114th, has placed some of the verses between 2/623 and 7/628. Verses 45-55, however, have been placed after "the massacre of Bani Quraidha" and prior to the expedition against the Jews of Khaybar in A.H. 7" by Nöldeke, and Wherry concurs with the view.[1] Verses 46 and 47 say :

> Should they (the Jews) come to thee seeking judgment in a dispute, either judge between them or leave them. If thou keepest away from them, they shall not harm thee at all. But if thou undertake to judge, then judge between them with equity. Surely Allah loves the just.
> And how will they make thee their judge, when they have the Torah containing Allah's commandments? Yet, they turn their backs, and they certainly do not believe.

A reference to the Jews seeking the Apostle's judgment in their disputes would be pointless if there were no Jews in Medina. Since the verses were revealed prior to the expedition to Khaybar, the Jews of Khaybar, Fadak and the neighbouring regions were not expected to bring their disputes to the Apostle.

No demographic data of the population of Yathrib at the time of the *Hijrah* is available to us, so it is not possible to give any exact figures for the Jewish population of Medina during the lifetime of the Apostle. However some definite figures have been provided by Ibn Isḥāq and other biographers, which give an approximate idea of the Jewish strength. The B. Qaynuqāᶜ provided 700 men to protect ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ubayy[2] and 600 to 900 fighting men of the B. Qurayẓah are reported to have been executed after the battle of the *Aḥzāb*.[3] The B. al-Naḍīr occupied a position of prestige in Medina and were the rivals of the B. Qurayẓah. The number of their male members is not given but, when they left Medina nine hundred camels were loaded with their belongings. One may reasonably conclude that they were not smaller in number than the B. Qaynuqāᶜ and the B. Qurayẓah. This gives us a conservative estimate of three thousand male members for the three tribes which clashed with the Apostle. When the B. Qaynuqāᶜ provided 700 men to protect ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ubayy they probably did not give all their men. If the other nine Jewish tribes

[1] W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qurᵓān* (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 207; Rev. E. M. Wherry, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran* (London, 1896), Vol. II, p. 119.

[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 546.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 690.

were even half of these three, although there is no such indication in our sources, the total male population of the Medinan Jews was six thousand. At the time of the Apostle, as Smith has pointed out, only patronymic tribes were possible.[1] The Jews with their consanguinal families comprising six to seven dependent members, therefore, formed a population of 36,000 to 42,000. After the expulsion of the B. al-Naḍīr and the reported execution of the B. Qurayẓah twelve to fourteen thousand Jews left Medina, which leaves the number of Jews in Medina at the signing of the *Ṣaḥīfah* between 24,000 to 28,000.[2] This is not a small number and did require the Apostle's attention.

The second pointer to the probable date of the *Ṣaḥīfah* is the declaration of Yathrib as *ḥaram*. As Gil points out "the *ḥaram* clause is one of the identifying points which oral tradition has preserved in reference to the document kept in the sheath of Dhū'lfaqār".[3] The treatment of a territory as sacred presupposes either a strong tradition and unbroken custom, as was the case with Mecca, or the military strength to enforce and protect that sacredness from external threat and internal strife. In the first years of the *Hijrah*, specially up to the Battle of the *Aḥzāb* (A.H. 5), the Apostle and his followers were not secure, and were certainly not sure if they could successfully protect the town. The peace within Medina, as we shall see, was not secure either. The B. Qaynuqāᶜ tried to provoke at least one if not two riots. The B. al-Naḍīr were in touch with the Meccans and the B. Qurayẓah's attitude during the battle of the *Aḥzāb* was a source of great anxiety to the defenders of Medina. An open conflict between the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* after the battle of B. al-Muṣṭaliq was averted by the Apostle with considerable restraint. It was on this occasion that ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ubayy had said, "By Allāh when we return to Medina the stronger will drive out the weaker".[4] During the battle of Badr (2/624) the Apostle could muster 313 fighters. This was hardly the strength with which approximately more than 36,000 Jews and a large number of *munāfiqūn* could be forced to respect the *ḥaram* obligations. The

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, p. 40.

[2] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. XI, Col. 1212 puts the number of Jews in Medina between 8,000 to 10,000, which is an understatement and not supported by our sources.

[3] Moshe Gil, "The constitution of Medina: a reconsideration", *Israel Oriental Studies* (Tel Aviv, 1974), Vol. IV, p. 57.

[4] Ibn Hishām, p. 726. The Qurᵓān, *Al-Munāfiqūn*, 8.

Apostle did not take hasty decisions, specially those which he could not execute. It would be wiser to wait till the situation was stabilized. Though the battle of the *Aḥzāb* was a defensive war and the Muslims had gained a victory on the home ground, yet they were not secure enough to declare Yathrib a *ḥaram*. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Yathrib was declared a *ḥaram* after the affair of the B. Qurayẓah, which in fact was a continuation of the battle of the *Aḥzāb*. It was at about the same time that the *munāfiqūn* had been brought under control. The Apostle was strong enough to administer a public reprimand to them after the affair of the B. al-Muṣṭaliq. The *Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn* was revealed in 6/627.[1] Al-Samhūdī, who has dealt with the date, the boundary and the prohibitions within the *ḥaram* territory in detail, placed the creation of this *ḥaram* according to *Ḥadīth* after the Apostle's return from Khaybar in 7/628.[2] Serjeant refers to al-Samhūdī and admits that he should have been "inclined to suggest that the declaration of the *ḥaram* could have taken place some time after the failure of the Prophet's enemies to take Medina at the battle of *al-Khandaq* at the earliest, and what more suitable occasion could there be for declaring Medina a sacred enclave than when it had just manifested its holiness by repelling the invader?"[3] However, for "many strong reasons, into which I cannot enter here"[4] Serjeant falls in line with other historians. One can detect Serjeant's reasons and one of them seems to be the same difficulty which Montgomery Watt faces. He goes on to say that "surprisingly enough, this document opens with clauses in which the Jews are spoken of as paying *nafaqah* along with the Muslims".[5] Historians, both Muslims and non-Muslims, seem to have assumed without any critical examination that after the departure of the B. al-Naḍīr and probably the B. Qurayẓah Medina was bereft of its Jewish population.

In fact, a closer examination of the *Ṣaḥīfah* indicates that the clauses pertaining to the Jews were incorporated after the B. al-Naḍīr and some of the B. Qurayẓah had been expelled from Medina for their 'treachery'. On his arrival in Yathrib the Apostle had not expected treachery from the Jews, though he did not expect whole-hearted

[1] Rev. E. M. Wherry, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran*, Vol. IV, p.147. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. IV, p. 369-70.
[2] Serjeant, "The Constitution of Medina", p. 9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*

support and help either. The Jews, too, in the first year of the *Hijrah*, the year normally assigned to the signing of the *Ṣaḥīfah*, had done nothing to arouse among the Muslims fear of deceit and duplicity on their part. In pre-Islamic Arabia the Jews did not have an unfavourable image. They were known for their skill in professions, for their mastery of the art of writing and their steadfastness.[1] Above all they were known for their nobility; they did not break their word. Al-Samawᵓal's loyalty to his friend Imruᵓal-Qays was proverbial throughout Arabia.[2] There were Jews like Qays b. Maᶜdīkarīb, who had committed acts of treachery, but that was not part of their reputation. Poets talked of al-Samawᵓal's fidelity and hospitality.[3] It is, therefore, curious that the word 'treachery'[4] should have been used in eight articles in the *Ṣaḥīfah*. Except for Article 40, all the seven articles[5] in which the word is used pertain to the Jews. The logical conclusion would seem to be that the Muslims became wiser after the events, and, having experienced treachery from the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah, they wished to make clear that treachery would automatically cancel all covenants and agreements. The Apostle seemed to be disinclined to suffer the unpleasantness of rejecting intercessions on behalf of the defaulting Jews from the Aws or from the Khazraj.

While we agree with the views expressed both by Sergeant[6] and Watt[7] that there is much that is bound to remain conjectural and obscure in the existing text of the *Ṣaḥīfah*, we may be nearer to the facts if the history of the *Ṣaḥīfah* is reconstructed in the following manner.

1. The first twenty-three articles form part of the original agreement between the Apostle and the *Anṣār* at al-ᶜAqabah or shortly after the *Hijrah*.[8]

[1] Ilse Lichtenstadter, "Some References to Jews in Pre-Islamic Arabic Literature", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. X (1940), pp. 185-194.

[2] The sceptical view taken by D.S. Margoliouth in *The Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the Rise of Islam*, pp. 76-81, in regard to the genuineness of Al-Samawᵓal's verses does not affect his reputation.

[3] Ilse Lichtenstadter, pp. 185-194.

[4] ظلم. The numbering of the articles follows Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 221-225.

[5] Articles 25, 31, 33, 37, 39, 46 and 47.

[6] Sergeant, "The Constitution of Medina", p. 4.

[7] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 228.

[8] Ibn Hishām, p. 342; Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 227.

2. The other articles were added from time to time as the need arose.[1]
3. In view of our observations above, the articles pertaining to the Jews and the declaration of Medina as *ḥaram* were concluded after 7/628.

The force of logic, therefore, leads us to believe that the *ummah* was formed towards the concluding period of the Apostle's life and not immediately after his arrival in Yathrib. The Apostle died in 11/632.

The *Ṣaḥīfah* is actually not the constitution of a state ; it lays the guiding principles for building a multi-cultural and multi-religious *ummah* in which the dominant group will always be Muslim.[2] Having established the Muslim dominance, the *Ṣaḥīfah* also secures the following privileges for the dominant group :

1. The functions of the final court of appeal will be discharged by the Apostle.[3]
2. The question of war and peace is the prerogative of the Apostle.[4]

The non-Muslims included in the *ummah* will have the following rights :

1. The security of God is equal for all the groups.[5]
2. Non-Muslim members of the *ummah* have equal political and cultural rights with the Muslims. There will be complete

[1] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 227.

[2] Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World* 2nd. Ed. (Lahore 1968), and R. B. Sergeant, "The Constitution of Medina", have misunderstood the document.

[3] "Whenever there is anything about which you differ, it is to be referred to God and to Muhammad (peace be upon Him)." (Article 23). The text of the *Ṣaḥīfah* is given by Ibn Hishām (pp. 341-344), Hamidullah's text (pp. 41-54) has been compared with Ibn Abī Khaithamah, Ibn Kathīr and Abū ᶜUbayd. See also Watt's *Muhammad at Medina* (pp. 221-225).

[4] "No one of them may go out (on a military expedition) without the permission of Muhammad (peace be upon Him) but he is not prohibited from taking vengeance for wounds. Whosoever shed blood shall be personally responsible for it as the member of his house, except where a person has been wronged. God is with those who observe this document scrupulously" (Article 36).

[5] "The security (*dhimmah*) of God is one; the humblest of them can, by extending his protection to anyone, put the obligation on all of them; the believers are brother to one another (*mawālī*) as against all peoples" (Article 15).

freedom of religion and all groups will be autonomous.[1]

3. Non-Muslims and Muslims will take up arms against the enemy of the *ummah* and will share the cost of war. Muslims and non-Muslims are sincere friends with honourable dealings and no treachery.[2]
4. Non-Muslims will not be obliged to take part in the religious wars of the Muslims.[3]

The *Ṣaḥīfah* is a clear indication of the lines on which the Apostle was building the *ummah*. It was a multi-religious community. Its basis was neither territorial nor tribal. Article 20 of the *Ṣaḥīfah* implies the exclusion of idolators (*mushrikūn*) from the *ummah* and since the *Ṣaḥīfah* included the Jews of Yathrib in the *ummah* it appears that only a belief in the Unity of God was essential for the membership of the *ummah*.

There were no Christians in Medina, so they did not join the *ummah*. But in 9/630 when a deputation of Christians under the leadership of ᶜAbdul-Masīḥ ᶜĀqib, al-Ayham and Bishop Abū Ḥāritha b. ᶜAlqama visited Medina the Apostle invited the Christians to join him on the basis of the unity of God.[4] He said :

> O People of the Book ! Come to a word equal between us and you that we worship none but Allāh, and that we associate no partner with him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allāh.[5]

It is significant that this invitation was extended to them after they had declined the Apostle's offer to accept Islam.[6] The Qurʾānic

[1] "The Jews of Banū ᶜAwf are an *ummah* along with the believers. To the Jews their *dīn* and to the Muslims their *dīn*. This applies both to them and their clients, except for him who is guilty of oppression, or treachery; he brings evil only on himself and members of his house" (Article 25, Articles 26 to 35 are similar).

[2] "It is for the Jews to bear their expenses and for the Muslims to bear their expenses. Between them there will be help against those who fight against the people of the *Ṣaḥīfah*. Between them is sincere friendship and honourable dealing, not treachery, no one shall violate the pledge of his ally and there is help for the person wronged" (Article 37).

[3] "And if they (the Jews) are invited to a peace to participate in and to adhere to it, they shall participate in it and adhere to it, and if they invite likewise, the same shall be incumbent upon the believers in their favour, except whoever goes to war in the cause of religion" (*Article* 45).

[4] Ibn Hishām, pp. 401-411.

[5] The Qurʾān, *Āl ᶜImrān*, 64.

[6] Ibn Hishām, p. 411.

invitation "to come to a word equal between us and you" does not, therefore, provide a basis for a compromise on matters of faith. The Apostle's biographers, Tradition collectors and jurists working under a mighty Muslim empire have not preserved for us the answer to this offer given by the Christians of Najrān. But there are indications that they accepted to join the *ummah* on the terms of the *Ṣaḥīfah* as far as they could be applied to that region. They accepted the dominant role of Muslims as the administrators of justice, and requested the Apostle "to send a man he could trust, to decide between them in certain financial matters in dispute among them."[1] Abū ʿUbaydah b. al-Jarrāḥ was accordingly appointed by the Apostle as a judge for the Christians of Najrān.[2]

There was, however, flexibility in applying this principle. It was the claim to believe in one God and not the practice which was the criterion. Though the Jews have been accused by the Qurʾān of associating ʿUzair with God, Islam accepts them monotheists. This seems to be the foundation of the *ummah*. It is the concept of the Unity of God which leads to the idea of oneness of the universe and the universal concept of the *ummah*, emphasizing the essential equality of the rights of all men. The Jews or Christians were not expected to change their religion. Their belief in the Unity of God was sufficient basis for cooperation, but not integration. It was the concept of a multi-religious society. It was a plural society allowing entry on the basis of elective affinities in which racial or ethnic differences had no relevance, but the belief in the Unity of God was essential.

Though the *ummah* was a pre-political community, yet it was not un-political. By its very nature politics is inherent in any process of community building. "It is interesting to note that this first constitution of the Arabian Prophet dealt almost exclusively with the civil and political relations of the citizens among themselves and with the outside."[3]

In this pre-political *ummah* the Apostle exercised authority by virtue of his divine sanction. While the Quraysh rejected the formula of 'Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allāh', when signing the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah, the Jews of Medina seemed to have acquiesced

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 410-411; Ibn Saʿd, p. 412.

[2] Ibn Saʿd, p. 412.

[3] Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (London, 1950) p. 43. See also J. Obermann, "Early Islām", *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, ed. R.C. Denton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) p. 270.

to the adoption of a modified formula for the purposes of the *Ṣaḥīfah*. According to Abū ᶜUbayd the words used were, "Muḥammad the Apostle".[1] It does not say whose Apostle. The formulation seems to have been vague enough to be acceptable to the Jews. Though Ibn Isḥāq an earlier authority gives the full formula, "Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allāh", we are inclined to accept Abū ᶜUbayd's version. There seems to be no motive, except caution to use a phrase, which was definitely unconventional and awkward. Having accepted a non-dominant position in the *ummah*, the Jews of Medina probably had no choice but to agree to the appellation with the tacit understanding that it represented the view of the dominant group. Had this understanding not been there they would have not been described as Jews at all.

To search for any theoretical basis of the distribution of authority in the *ummah* would be futile. Whatever authority was needed at this formative period of the community was provided by the Apostle.

Mecca was conquered soon after the signing of the *Ṣaḥīfah*, if we agree to the date we have sought to establish above. This conquest significantly altered the situation. The pagans of Mecca lost control of the Kaᶜbah and they were prohibited from approaching "the Sacred mosque after this year of theirs".[2] In the next verse the Muslims were ordered to fight those from among the people of the Book who believe not in Allāh nor in the Last Day, nor hold unlawful what Allāh and His messenger had declared to be unlawful, nor follow the true religion, until they pay the *jizyah* with their own hand and acknowledge their subjection.[3]

Under the terms of the *Ṣaḥīfah* the Jews were not required to pay any tax and there was no explicit clause demanding their subjection. With these verses the dominance of the Muslims was formalised, but no other restriction was added. There is nothing in these verses or any other subsequent verses to change the multi-religious character of the *ummah*.[4] It might be true to say the Jews of Medina, having lost the struggle to retain their dominant character

[1] محمد النبى Abū ᶜUbaid al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl* (Cairo, 1968) paragraph 517.

[2] The Qurᵓān, *Al-Taubah*, 27.

[3] *Ibid., Al-Taubah*, 28.

[4] Even though the modern concept of a community may militate against the existence of two levels of membership, in the seventh century this did not appear to have presented any difficulties.

in Medina, were not in a position to play any significant role. The *maghāzī* writers seem to have lost all interest in the Yathrib Jews after the discomfiture of the B. Qurayẓah and other Jews after the peace treaty with the Jews of Khaybar. The Muslim history of the period, as transmitted to us, is actually the history of the *maghāzī*. Since the Jewish population of Medina during the later period of the Apostle's life did not involve itself in any conflict or trouble it ceased to be of any interest to the *maghāzī* writer. The Apostle did not live very long after the conquest of Mecca. It is difficult to say what form the *ummah* would have taken had the author of the *Ṣaḥīfah* lived longer. With his death the *Ṣaḥīfah* and the *ummah* created by it, as well as the Jews who were part of the *ummah*, passed out of the picture. The term *ummah*, as with all living institutions, acquired a new definition under the Apostle's successors. The Sharī'ah which determined the status of non-Muslim monotheists "did not derive directly from the Qur'ân, it developed out of a practice which often diverged from the Qur'ân's intentions and even from its explicit wording".[1] It also did not develop "in close connection with practice, but, as the expression of a religious ideal",[2] as understood by Muslim theoreticians and ideologists of the Muslim ruling class, which was in fact not only in opposition to practice but in direct contradiction to the original model set by the Apostle.

[1] Joseph Schacht, "Pre-Islamic Background and Early Development of Jurisprudence", in *Law in the Middle East*, ed. by Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny (Washington D.C., 1955), Vol. I, p. 41.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

CHAPTER III

THE JEWISH SUPPORT TO MEDINAN OPPOSITION

> Muḥammad's followers for their part—quite apart from their adherence to the fundamental ideas of Judaism and to the precepts of Noah—showed perfect willingness to conform to a number of Jewish rituals. In theory, therefore, there was no reason why the two communities should not have lived peaceably together. But the Jewish tribes of Medina had probably not abandoned the idea of exerting a considerable political influence over the oasis as a whole. It was quite obvious to them, probably before very long, that Muḥammad's behaviour and the importance he was assuming were likely to interfere with this objective.
>
> ——MAXIME RODINSON

The *ummah*,[1] as visualized by the Apostle and formalized in the *Ṣaḥīfah*, which we have discussed in the previous chapter, could smoothly function only by the willing cooperation of its various constituents — the *Muhājirūn* the *Anṣār* and the Jews of Medina. The first five years of the Apostle's life in Medina, it seems, were spent in trying to obtain that cooperation. A section of the *Anṣār*, called the *munāfiqūn*[2], and three Jewish clans of Medina— the B. Qaynuqāᶜ,

[1] The *ummah* in the context of our discussion of the Jews of Medina is confined to the definition given to it by the *Ṣaḥīfah* i.e. 'the people of the *Ṣaḥīfah*.' For a fuller discussion of its meanings see Montgomery Watt, 'Ideal Factors in the Origin of Islam', *The Islamic Quarterly*, No. 3 (October 1955), pp 161-74. and his book *Islamic Political Thought*, Rudi Paret's article in *EI*(1) and Abul Aᶜla Maudūdī, *Islamic Way of Life*, referred to in the previous chapter.

[2] Though a precise and rigid definition of the word is not possible, it would perhaps be safer to say that the term describes those inhabitants of Medina, who had outwardly accepted Islam, but were suspects for various reasons. They were unreliable during the time of crises (The Qurᵓān, *Al-Aḥzāb*,12-24), avoided participation financially or physically in the *Jihād* (The Qurᵓān, *Muhammad*, 20, 31) and even looked forward to the time when the Apostle would be expelled from Medina (The Qurᵓān, *Al-Munāfiqūn*, 8). See The Qurᵓān, *Al-Munāfiqūn* and Ibn Hishām pp. 411-13.

the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah—withheld that cooperation without which the *ummah* could not play an effective role. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ubayy,a prominent Medinan opponent of the Apostle,led the *munāfiqūn*, while the leaders of the B. al-Naḍīr provided the main Jewish opposition.[1] In the next two chapters we shall examine that Jewish opposition.

The Apostle escaped from the Meccan persecution to the safety of Yathrib in September 622. The date marks not only a new era in Muslim history, but also the second and most crucial phase of the Muslim struggle for survival. While it is admitted that there is "a scarcity of information about the internal politics of Medina"[2] during the early years of the Apostle's *Hijrah*, the strength of the opposition which the Muslims had to face does not seem to be fully realized. The Muslim hagiographer by playing up the miraculous aspects of the Apostle's *maghāzī* has complicated the historian's task of ascertaining the true strength of the Apostle's supporters and opponents up to the time of the truces of Ḥudaibiyah (6/628) and Khaybar (7/628). After an allowance is made for the tendency of the *maghāzī* writer to exaggerate the opposition and understate the Muslim strength, the fact remains that during the first two years the Quraysh of Mecca, the Jews of Khaybar, the pagan tribes of the Ḥijāz and above all the *munāfiqūn* and the Jews of Yathrib had collectively superior and decisive strength vis-a-vis the new Muslim community.

Though conscious of their strength, the pagans and the Jews were not unmindful of the progress the Apostle was making. They were worried at the advance of Islam. To stop its further progress the total communication media of the time were employed against the Apostle. The propagandist poets, whom Rodinson describes as "the journalists of the time", and Carmichael as kindlers of battle[3] accused the Muslims of Medina of dishonouring themselves by submitting to an outsider. Abū ᶜAfak taunted the children of Qaylah (the Aws and the Khazraj) :

> I have lived a long time, but I have never seen
> Either a house or gathering of people

[1] See Ibn Hishām, pp. 351-400 for the details of the Jewish opposition to the Apostle.

[2] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 180.

[3] Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, tr. Anne Carter (New York, 1971), p. 194. "A tribal poet among the Bedouin", as Joel Carmichael puts it, was "no mere versifier, but a kindler of battle", his poems were "thought of as the serious beginning of real warfare". (*The Shaping of the Arabs, A Study in Ethnic Identity*, New York, 1967, p. 38).

more loyal and faithful to
Its allies, when they call on it,
Than that of the children of Qayla
(the Aws and Khazraj) as a whole.
The mountains will crumble before they submit
Yet here is a rider come among them who had
divided them.
(He says) 'This is permitted; this is forbidden'
to all kinds of things.
But if you had believed in power
And in might, why did you not follow a *tubba*.[1]

Abū ʿAfak in effect asked: The *Tubbaʿ* was after all a south Arabian king of great reputation, but you resisted him; now what has happened to you that you have accepted the claims of a Meccan refugee?

ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān[2] was more forceful and forthright :

Fucked men of Mālik and Nābit
And of ʿAwf, fucked men of Khazraj
You obey a stranger who does not belong among you,
Who is not of Murād, nor of Madh'ḥij (Yemenite tribes)
Do you, when your own chiefs have been murdered, hope in him
Like men greedy for meal soup when it is cooking?
Is there no man of honour who will take advantage of an unguarded moment
And cut off the gulls' hopes?[3]

While ʿAṣmāʾ was putting ʿAwf and Khazraj to shame, Kaʿb b. al-Ashraf was singing erotic prologues to the Apostle's wives,[4] and composing insulting verses about the Muslim women.[5] Ibn Isḥāq has preserved for us some of Kaʿb's amatory verses which give an idea

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 995. The English translation is by Anne Carter given in Rodinson's *Mohammed*, p. 157.

[2] Goitein like Rodinson observes that "the women of ancient Arabia were famous not only for their dirges and songs of praise, but in particular for their satirical poems, which largely served the same function as the press of today". (*Jews and Arabs*, p. 30).

[3] Ibn Hishām, pp. 995-96; Anne Carter's translation in Rodinson's *Mohammed*, pp. 157-58.

[4] Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Tabaqāt al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Joseph Hell (Leiden, 1916), p. 71.

[5] Ibn Hishām, p. 550.

of his style. The following lines are devoted to Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Ḥārith:

Are you off without stopping in the valley
And leaving Umm al-Faḍl in Mecca?
Out would come what she bought from the pedlar of bottles,
Henna and hair dye
What lies 'twixt ankle and elbow is in motion[1]
When she tries to stand and does not
Like Umm Ḥakīm when she was with us
The link between us firm and not to be cut
She is one of B. ʿĀmir who bewitches the heart,
And if she wished she could cure my sickness.
The glory of women and of a people is their father
A people held in honour true to their oath.
Never did I see the sunrise at night till I saw her
Display herself to us in darkness of the night.[2]

While this campaign of vulgarity and abuse was conducted by the poets, a Jew from the B. Qaynuqāʿ, Shās b. Qays, ordered a Jewish youth to recite some poems composed on the occasion of the battle of Buʿāth to a mixed gathering of Muslims composed of the Aws and the Khazraj till they got so worked up that both the Aws and the Khazraj challenged each other saying, "If you wish we will do the same again'. The excited parties said, 'We will. Your meeting place is outside—that being the volcanic tract—To arms! To arms!".[3] As soon as the Apostle heard the news he hurried to the spot with the Emigrants and addressed the men of the Aws and the Khazraj thus:

O Muslims, remember God. Remember God. Will you act as pagans while I am with you after God has guided you to Islam and honoured you thereby and made a clean break with paganism; delivered you thereby from unbelief; made you friends thereby?[4]

The following verses were revealed on the occasion:[5]

O ye who believe, if you obey any party of those who have been given the Book, they will turn you again into disbelievers after you have believed. How would you disbelieve, while you are the people to whom the signs of Allāh are rehearsed and among whom the Messenger of Allāh is present. He

[1] Guillaume's translation (*The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 366-67). The pornographic nature of this line becomes evident when it is realised that it refers to the motion of Umm al-Faḍl's buttocks when she is reclining.
[2] Al-Ṭabarī, Vol. II, p. 488. Ibn Hishām has edited out the passage.
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 386.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

who holds fast to Allāh is indeed guided to the right path. O ye who believe, be mindful of your duty to Allāh in all respects, every moment of your lives, so that death, whenever it overtakes you, should find you in a state of complete submission to Him. Take fast hold, all together, of the rope of Allāh, and be not divided. Call to mind the favour of Allāh which He bestowed upon you when you were at enmity with each other and He united your hearts in love so that by His grace you became as brethren.[1]

This was the atmosphere of unrest in Medina in which the Battle of Badr took place. Within less than two years of the *Hijrah* (Ramaḍān 2 A. H./March 624) three hundred and fourteen Muslims led by the Apostle defeated a Meccan army of a thousand Qurayshites at Badr. The dead Meccans numbered between fifty and seventy, including the leading Quraysh opponent of the Apostle, Abū al-Ḥakam ᶜAmr b. Hishām (Abū Jahl) and several other leaders. Another seventy or so were taken prisoners. On the other side only fourteen Muslims were killed. There were no Muslim prisoners. This was the first major encounter with the Meccans after the Apostle's migration from Mecca.[2]

This notable victory considerably strengthened the Muslim position in Medina, "which had perhaps been deteriorating during the previous few months when it looked as if he (the Apostle) was unlikely to achieve anything".[3] The incipient opposition in Medina, which had earlier taken the Apostle and his followers rather lightly, seems to have become restive. The Jews and their allies, who had joined the Muslim ranks, but were sitting on the fence, waiting for the opportunity to expel the Muslims from Medina[4], were naturally disturbed. It seems they were spoiling for a confrontation in Medina, which the Apostle intended to avoid at any cost. During this period probably some incident took place in Medina creating friction between the Muslims and the B. Qaynuqāᶜ. Ibn Isḥāq did not report it, but his editor, Ibn Hishām added it to his narrative. An *Anṣārī* woman, according to him, was immodestly exposed by a Jewish goldsmith in the market place of the B. Qaynuqāᶜ. She uttered a loud cry

[1] The Qurᵓān, *Ālᶜ Imrān*, 100-104.

[2] Ibn Hishām, pp. 427-539; al-Wāqidī, Vol. I, pp. 19-171; Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, pp. 11-27. Out of the seven expeditions which took place before Badr there was either no contact or no fighting in six; only in the Nakhlah expedition led by ᶜAbd Allāh b. Jaḥsh involving seven to twelve people was there fighting and one man was killed.

[3] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 15.

[4] The Qurᵓān *Al-Munāfiqūn*, 8; Ibn Hishām, p. 559.

B. al-Naḍīr shut themselves up inside their forts and waited for the help.

The story of the B. Qaynuqāᶜ was repeated. The Apostle went with his Companions and sat down till they surrendered. No one moved to help the B. al-Naḍīr. *Sūrat al-Ḥashr*, which was revealed on this occasion, deals with the incident.[1] Referring to the promised help the Qurʾān says:

> Knowest thou not the hypocrites who say to their disbelieving companions among the people of the Book: if you are turned out of Medina, we will surely go out with you, and we will never obey anyone at all against you, and if you are fought against we will certainly help you.[2]

The siege lasted for a fortnight and then the B. al-Naḍīr surrendered. They were deported, but allowed to take what they could carry on their camels, except for their weapons. They went with six hundred camels loaded with their possessions, even dismantling their houses and carrying away the lintels of the doors. Wood was expensive and they would need it for their new houses. Some went to Khaybar and others went to Syria. Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, Kinānah b. al-Rabīᶜ b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq and Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab were among those who went to Khaybar. Ibn Isḥāq reports that the defeated clan wound its way "with such pomp and splendour as had never been seen in any tribe in their days".[3] Al-Wāqidī, not to be outdone by Ibn Isḥāq, added that the women of the B. al-Naḍīr wore their finest dresses and decked themselves in their jewels. No one had ever seen women so beautiful who vied with shining pearls and the full moon.[4] Ibn Saᶜd with his usual restraint dropped this *qāṣṣ* embellishment from his account.

A great many factors seemed to have conspired in the second year of the *Hijrah* to produce conditions which made the B. Qaynuqāᶜ, probably, an unsuspecting victim of the *munāfiqūn's* machination. This benefit of doubt could not be given to the B. al-Naḍīr. The B. Qaynuqāᶜ seemed to have invited conflict at a time when the Muslims could respond from a position of strength and consequently afford

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 654. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi al-Bayān* (Cairo, 1954) Vol. XXVIII, pp. 27-40; Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, Vol. IV, pp. 79-82; Al-Bayḍāwī, Vol. II, pp. 332-33.

[2] The Qurʾān, *Al-Ḥashr*, 11.

[3] Ibn Hishām, pp. 653-54.

[4] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. I, p. 376.

generosity. The B. al-Naḍīr adopted a hostile posture at a time when the Apostle and his followers were in deep waters. To treat them with the same leniency which was shown to the B. Qaynuqāᶜ would have been a sign of weakness, and disastrous to the Muslim prestige.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAILURE OF THE CONFEDERACY

> It seems as if the strain and trouble of trying to take a critical view of confident assertions so troubles the human mind that men and women are prepared to concede the most damning case against their fathers and grandfathers in order to avoid the tedious work of disentangling the evidence for themselves.
>
> — G. KITSON CLARK

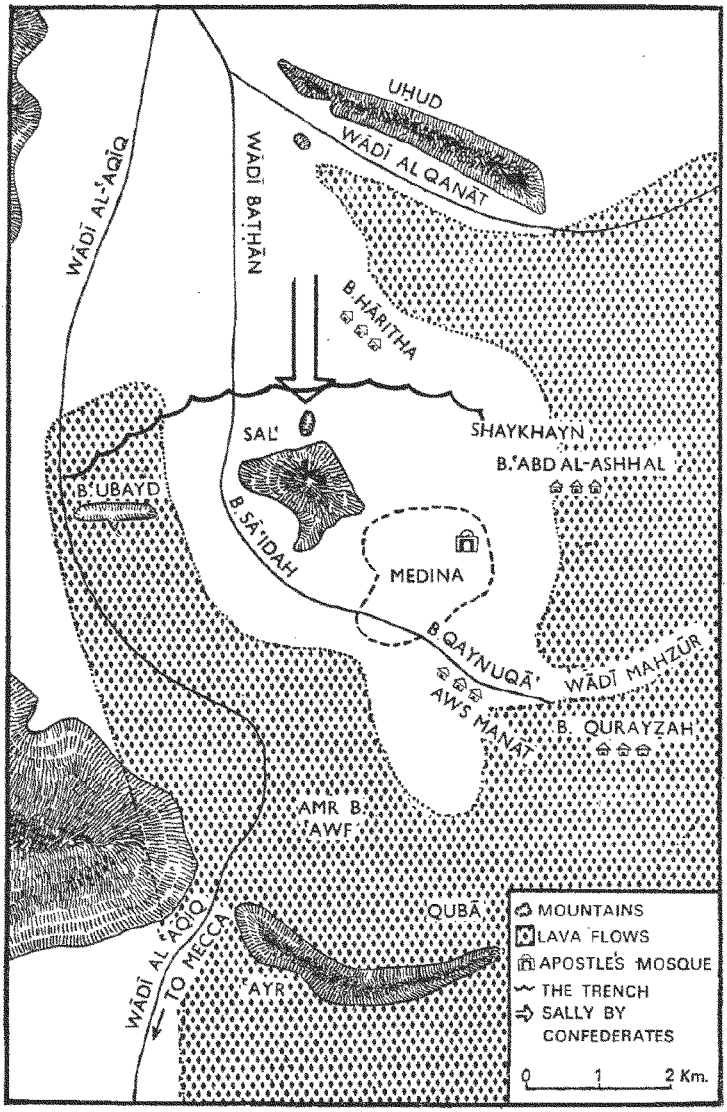
Exiled but not exhausted, defeated but not dejected, the B. al-Naḍīr settled in Khaybar fairly quickly. In the peace and quiet which Khaybar offered, the leaders of the B. al-Naḍīr must have taken stock of the whole situation. The new religion was not only a threat to the Meccans, but to the Jews as well. If the initiative was left to the Muslims they might strike again and do so at a time of their own choosing. Individually neither the Jews nor the Meccans could destroy this band of poor but committed people under a leader who commanded absolute authority and unwavering loyalty. So the B. al-Naḍīr decided to send a mission to Mecca. It was a large delegation of twenty leaders. Prominent among the B. al-Naḍīr, who led the delegation, were Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab and Kinānah b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq. A number of leaders from the B. Wā'il also joined this delegation; the B. Wā'il was a sub-tribe of the Khazraj but was closely linked with the Jews. This delegation arrived in Mecca in the summer of 5/626 and invited the Quraysh to join them in an all-out attack on Medina so that they might get rid of the Apostle once for all. The Quraysh responded gladly to their invitation to fight the Apostle. From Mecca this delegation of the Jews went to the Ghaṭafān and extended the same invitation. The delegation informed them that the Quraysh had already accepted their invitation. They also offered

them annually half of the date crop of Khaybar as the price of their joining the Quraysh.[1] Later during the Battle of the *Aḥzāb* the Apostle, who obviously knew of this arrangement between the B. al-Naḍīr and the Ghaṭafān, matched the offer and promised them a third of the dates of Medina on condition that they would go back with their followers.[2] The offer was, however, not ratified by the *Anṣār*. The Jews also contacted their allies among the Banū Sa^{c}d, another sub-tribe of the Khazraj. The Banū Asad and the Banū Sulaym were also approached and they too accepted the invitation to fight against the Apostle.[3]

Preparations for the joint attack started soon and tribal forces began to arrive in early February 9/627. The Ghaṭafān and the B. Fazārah came with 2,000 men and a thousand camels under ^{c}Uyaynah b. Ḥiṣn b. Ḥudhayfah b. Badr. The B. Sulaym sent a contingent of 700. Ashja^{c} and the B. Murrah sent 400 warriors each. The B. Asad's contingent, whose strength is not known, arrived under Ṭulayḥah b. Khauwaylid. The Quraysh marched under the leadership of Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb b. Umayyah; there were 4,000 of them with 1,500 camels and 300 horses. The total strength of the army, which Abū Sufyān led against the Muslims was 10,000.[4]

The Muslims dug a trench, which ran from Shaykhayn to the Mount of Banū ^{c}Ubayd. The Apostle established his camp just ahead of the hill of Sal^{c}. The total Muslim strength was 3,000. The women and children were sent away from the main front. The B. Qurayẓah were in the rear, which was not covered. (See map on the next page). As Watt observes, "an attack from the south on the Muslim rear by Qurayẓah might have put an end to Muḥammad's career."[5] During the siege, however, no major action took place and the B. Qurayẓah did not get an opportunity to attack. There were no large stocks of food in Medina and the Muslims began to feel the pangs of hunger.[6] The food also ran short in the enemy camp; Abū Sufyān had made no provisions for such a long siege either. Outnumbered and starving

[1] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 443. Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, p. 301.
[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 676.
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 669; Ibn Sa^{c}d, II, pp. 65-66.
[4] Ibn Sa^{c}d, II, p. 66.
[5] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 39.
[6] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, chapter on *Al-Aḥzāb*, Vol. V, pp. 138-39. Ibn Hishām, the story of the dates and the ewe, pp. 671-72, Ḥudhayfah's report on hunger, p. 683.



Medina at the time of the Battle of the *Aḥzāb*

with their rear exposed the Muslim were in a bad shape; their plight has been described by the Qurʾān in the following verses :

> Your eyes became distracted and your hearts reached your throats, while you thought thoughts about Allāh. Then were the believers sorely tried, and were violently shaken.[1]

To break the impasse Abū Sufyān sent Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab to the B. Qurayẓah inviting them to join the Confederates.[2] After some hesitance their leader Kaʿb. b. Asad agreed. The Qurʾān refers to the B. Qurayẓah as "the people of the Book who had backed up the Confederates".[3] In the meantime, the Apostle got wind of Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab's approach to the B. Qurayẓah and sent Saʿd b. Muʿādh and others to find the truth; they went, talked to the B. Qurayẓah and confirmed the report. Later on, a scout of the B. Qurayẓah who had been sent to reconnoitre in the area where the Muslim families were quartered, was killed by Ṣafīyah the aunt of the Apostle.[4]

The Battle of the *Aḥzāb* was actually a major siege in which three armies, "the Quraysh, the Ghaṭafān and the B. Qurayẓah"[5] invested Medina. "They came at you from above you and from below you".[6] According to Ibn Isḥāq those who came from above were the B. Qurayẓah and those who came from below were the Quraysh and the Ghaṭafān.[7] It was an expensive mistake. The Confederates were reasonably optimistic about their ability to take Medina. During the siege which lasted nearly a month there were only two actions; an individual combat in which ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Wudd b. Abū Qays was killed by ʿAlī[8] and the second in which Ṣafīyah killed a scout from the B. Qurayẓah. None of the three investing armies got a chance to fight an open battle. Abū Sufyān, unable to endure the severe winter and wind, broke camp and withdrew. The Ghaṭafān followed him and withdrew to their own country. But the B. Qurayẓah could not go with them. The Muslims now turned to them and they shut themselves in their forts. It was the same old story of the B. Qaynuqāʿ and the B. al-Naḍīr. The Jews had not learnt the simple

[1] The Qurʾān, *Al-Aḥzāb*, 10-11. Al-Bukhārī, ʿĀʾishah's report on this *sūrah*, Vol. V, p. 138. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, Vol. III, pp. 469-72.
[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 674.
[3] The Qurʾān, *Al-Aḥzāb*, 26. Ibn Hishām, p. 693.
[4] Ibn Hishām, p. 680.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 694.
[6] The Qurʾān, *Al-Aḥzāb*, 10.
[7] Ibn Hishām, p. 694.
[8] Ibn Hishām, p. 678.

lesson that the Muslims had adopted a new strategy, and their *āṭām* had ceased to provide security against the new method of Muslim warfare. The Apostle went with his companions and laid siege till they surrendered.

This is more or less the standard version of the incident as reported by Ibn Isḥāq[1], al-Wāqidī[2] and Ibn Sa^{c}d[3] with slight variations in details. These are the facts as they emerge from the Muslim sources. There is no corroborative evidence from the Jewish or Christian sources. The condemnation of the B. Qurayẓah, however, as reported by Ibn Isḥāq and other *maghāzī*-writers, does not stand to reason and it is at variance with the Qur$^{\prime}$ān.

Before we analyse the various accounts of the conflict with the B. Qurayẓah it is interesting to examine Ibn Isḥāq's treatment of the pre-Islamic reports concerning this tribe. We are first introduced to the Banū Qurayẓah, when two of their rabbis advised the *Tubba^{c}* (5th century A.D.) not to destroy Yathrib because "Yathrib was the place where a prophet of the Quraysh would seek refuge in future and it would become his abode and a resting place."[4] The report is obviously written in the spirit of latter day history. The B. Qurayẓah are mentioned for the second time when, after the Apostle's arrival, the Jewish rabbis, including those of the B. Qurayẓah, told the polytheist Quraysh "your religion is better than his and you are on a better path than he and those who follow him".[5] The third reference is to the arbitration referred to the Apostle by the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah. The B. al-Naḍīr used to pay half of the normal bloodwit instead of the full 100 *wasaq* of grains to the B. Qurayẓah, but the Apostle "awarded the bloodwit in equal shares".[6]

These three references which precede the main account of events connected with the affair of the B. Qurayẓah show that Ibn Isḥāq might have been swayed by the contemporary ideas about the Jews: they knew or at least their rabbis knew even before the birth of the

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 669-713.
[2] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, pp. 496-531.
[3] Ibn Sa^{c}d, Vol. II, p. 65-78.
[4] Ibn Hishām, pp. 13-15.
[5] Ibn Hishām, p. 391.
[6] Ibn Hishām, p. 396. Ibn Kathīr explains that the B. al-Naḍīr did not treat the B. Qurayẓah as their equals. If in a dispute a man of the B. Qurayẓah killed a man from the B. al-Naḍīr he paid 100 *wasaq* of grain, but if the B. al-Naḍīr killed a man of the B. Qurayẓah he paid only 50 *wasaq*. (Vol. II, p. 60).

Apostle that a prophet would appear among the Arabs. In spite of that knowledge their rabbis told the polytheist Quraysh that their religion was better than that of the Apostle who like them believed in one God. Ibn Isḥāq has given the following account of the whole affair:

> The Apostle besieged the B. Qurayẓah for twenty-five nights until they were sore pressed and felt sure that the Apostle would not leave them until he had made an end of them. At this stage Kaᶜb b. Asad[1] offered them three alternatives :
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> 1) Accept Muhammad as a true prophet and save yourselves, or
> 2) Kill your wives and children and fight with Muhammad till God decides between you and him, or finally
> 3) Tonight is the eve of the Sabbath; take Muhammad and his companions by surprise.

The Jews did not accept any one of these proposals and requested the Apostle to send Abū Lubābah for consultations. Abū Lubābah told them to surrender, but at the same time pointed with his hand to his throat signifying slaughter. In the morning they submitted to the Apostle's judgment. The Aws said, 'O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of Khazraj, and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren'. The Apostle asked, 'Will you be satisfied if one of your own number pronounces judgment on them?' When they agreed the Apostle appointed Saᶜd b. Muᶜādh.[2] The Aws now requested Saᶜd to treat his friends (the B. Qurayẓah) kindly, to which Saᶜd replied, 'The time has come for Saᶜd in the cause of God, not to care for any man's censure'. Hearing this some of the Aws went back to the quarter of B. ᶜAbd al-Ashhal and announced the death of B. Qurayẓah before Saᶜd reached there, because of what they had heard him say. Saᶜd asked the Aws and the Apostle if they would accept his judgment. They agreed. Then Saᶜd gave his judgment: The men should be killed, the property divided and the women and children taken as captives. Then the B. Qurayẓah surrendered. The Apostle confined them in Medina in the quarters of a woman. Trenches were dug in the market of Medina. They were brought out to him in batches and their heads were struck off in those trenches. As the B. Qurayẓah were taken out in the batches they asked Kaᶜb what he thought would be done to them. He replied, 'It is death'. This went on until the Apostle made an end of them. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900. ᶜĀ'ishah who was one of the spectators said only one woman was killed. She was sitting with ᶜĀ'ishah when an unseen voice called her name and she was taken away and beheaded. ᶜĀ'ishah used to say, 'I shall never forget my wonder at her good spirits and her loud laughter when all the time she knew that she would be killed.[3]

Now we shall examine the testimony in detail. The beginning of Ibn Isḥāq's story is quite impressive: "According to what

[1] Kaᶜb b. Asad was the chief of the B. Qurayẓah.

[2] Ibn Hishām adds without *isnad* that the Jews said, 'O Mohammad, we will submit to the judgment of Saᶜd b. Muᶜādh.'

[3] The above summary is based on Ibn Isḥāq's account. Ibn Hishām, pp. 684-69.

al-Zuhrī told me."[1] But the story deals with (i)[2] Gabriel's appearance before the Apostle and (ii) the Apostle's instructions that none should perform the afternoon prayer (*ʿAṣr*) until after he reached B. Qurayẓah. Some of them "prayed the afternoon prayer there after the last evening prayer. God did not blame them for that in His Book, nor did the Apostle reproach them. My father Isḥāq b. Yasār told me this Tradition from Maʿbad b. Mālik Anṣārī".[3] To accept the view that Maʿbad b. Mālik Anṣārī's report does not conclude al-Zuhrī's report and the rest of the account given by Ibn Isḥāq is also on the authority of al-Zuhrī is to accept that al-Zuhrī not only reported Kaʿb b. Asad's imaginary speech but also incidents which are mutually exclusive. In view of al-Zuhrī's reputation for reliability[4], it is difficult to concur with this view. A more reasonable explanation would be to consider that while some of Ibn Isḥāq's information was derived from al-Zuhrī, he added details which were not sufficiently supported; on such occasions his sources are "not always particularly clear".[5]

After this introduction the subsequent account up to the delivery of Saʿd b. Muʿādh's judgment is of doubtful authority.[6]

Ibn Isḥāq tells us that (iii) the Apostle besieged the B. Qurayẓah for twenty-five nights.[7] But Ibn Saʿd says that they were besieged for fifteen days.[8] (iv) When the Jews felt sure that the Apostle would not leave them until he made an end of them, Kaʿb b. Asad addressed them in the following words :

'O Jews, you can see what has happened to you. I offer you three alternatives. Accept what you wish. (i) We will follow this man and accept him as true, for by God it has become plain to you that he is the prophet who has been sent and that it is he whom you find mentioned in your scripture; if you do so your lives, your property, your women and children will be saved.' They said, 'We will never abandon the laws of the Torah and never change it for another'. He said, 'Then if you won't accept this suggestion (ii) let us kill our wives and children and send men with drawn

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 684.
[2] All incidents in the account of the B. Qurayẓah have been given consecutive Roman numbers.
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 685.
[4] See A.A. Duri's exhaustive article "Al-Zuhrī" in *BSOAS*, Vol. IX, 1957, pp. 1-12.
[5] *Supra*, Introduction, p. 16.
[6] The incident of Abū Lubābah's forgiveness is an exception for which Ibn Isḥāq has given an *isnād;* it has been reported on the authority of Yazīd b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Qusayṭ.
[7] Ibn Hishām, p. 685.
[8] Ibn Saʿd, Vol. II, p. 74.

swords to Muhammad and his companions leaving no encumbrances behind us, until God decides between us and Muhammad. If we do perish, we shall not leave children behind us to cause us anxiety. If we conquer we can acquire other wives and children'. They said, 'Should we kill these poor creatures? What would be the good of life when they were dead?' He said, 'Then if you will not accept this suggestion (iii) tonight is the eve of the Sabbath and it may well be that Muhammad and his companions will feel safe from us then, so come down, perhaps we can take Muhammad and his companions by surprise.' They said: 'Are we to profane our Sabbath and do on the Sabbath what those before us of whom you well know did and were turned into apes?' He answered, 'Not a single man among you from the day of your birth has ever passed a night resolved to do what he knows ought to be done.'[1]

It is at once apparent that the first alternative of Kaʿb b. Asad is a reflection of Ibn Isḥāq's questionable story of the rabbis of the B. Qurayẓah who had told the *Tubbaʿ* of the coming of the prophet.[2] The Jews, according to Ibn Isḥāq's version of Kaʿb's speech, knew that the Apostle was right and was the true messenger of God,[3] and still on the eve of their death they refused to accept him. The first alternative and the answer the Jews gave is patently absurd. If they were convinced that the Apostle was an impostor and they were ready to die then they were heroes, but if it had "become plain" to them that he was a prophet and they still persisted in their death-wish then it meant that the whole clan had gone mad. Obviously, it had not "become plain" to them and Ibn Isḥaq has put in Kaʿb b. Asad's mouth what had "become plain" to him.

The second alternative shows Ibn Isḥāq's ignorance of the Jewish law and history. These 600 to 900 men were going to fight an army of 3,000 soldiers, who had returned victorious from the Battle of the *Aḥzāb*. Though it seemed to be a mad act of self destruction, yet there was a slim hope. The victorious Muslims were in bad shape.[4] The general position in Judaism is that suicide is strictly forbidden "And surely the blood of your lives shall I require"[5] is considered a prohibition referring to suicide. The preservation of one's life is considered to be of such importance that man is not permitted to sacrifice

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 685-686.
[2] The story as suggested earlier has a latter day Muslim gloss.
[3] "... for by God it has become plain to you that he is the prophet who has been sent and that it is he whom you find mentioned in your scripture..." (Kaʿb b. Asad's speech).
[4] See *infra*, Chapter VI.
[5] Genesis 9:5.

his life even to avoid violating biblical commands, the exception being the three cardinal sins, murder, adultery and idol-worship.

> Indeed concerning the three for which he must lay down his life, many authorities hold that he is to allow himself to be killed rather than violate them, but must not actively destroy himself.[1]

There have been exceptions[2] but the general rule is that while one should fight to death one should not die by his own hands, or murder. If this tribe of the Jewish priests could fight like the defenders of Masada, it could inflict very heavy losses on the starving Muslims. But the morale of the besieged Jews was so low that Ka'b's advice portended suicide rather than victory.

Probably in the history of religious persecution Jews are the only minority group who while secretly remaining faithful to Judaism practised another religion which they or their ancestors had to adopt to save their lives. Marranos, Chuetas and Jadid al-Islam are some of the well known Crypto-Jews.[3] But no one from the B. Qurayẓah tried to save his life by accepting Islam. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in accepting that they all died as martyrs, but it seems to be too good to be true; it has the overtones of the story of the martyrs of Najrân. In 723 A.D. the Byzantine emperor ordered the Jews of Asia Minor to embrace Christianity under pain of severe punishment; many Jews submitted to this decree. They "were of the opinion that the storm would soon blow over, and that they would be permitted to return to Judaism."[4] Earlier in 654 the Jews of Toledo had to accept Christianity under similar circumstances.[5] The second alternative was, therefore, neither in accordance with the Jewish law, nor Jewish practice, and was above all devoid of logic.

The answer to the third alternative which Ka'b b. Asad had suggested also does not comply with the Jewish law. In refusing to fight on the eve of the Sabbath the Jews of the B. Qurayẓah said: "Are we to profane our Sabbath and do on the Sabbath what those

[1] "Suicide", *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Religion*, 1965, p. 367.
[2] Roman siege of Masada, Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book VII, Chapters 8-9. Also the incident of R. Moses' wife, *vide* Abraham ibn Daud, Sefer ha-Qabbalah, *The Book of Tradition* tr. and ed. Gershon D. Cohen (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 64.
[3] See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, under Crypto-Jews and also under individual headings.
[4] Graetz, p. 123.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

before us of whom you well know did and were turned into apes."[1] This answer betrays the superficiality which Muslim scholarship normally shows when dealing with Judaism. No wonder Margoliouth complains that "the most woeful ignorance is displayed by the compilers and interpreters of the Qurʾān about the part played by the Jews".[2]

Since the Maccabean revolt (175-135 B.C.) a rule had been promulgated that the preservation of life overrides the observance of the Sabbath.[3] All laws of the Sabbath or even the Day of Atonement can be overridden in the face of the sacred duty of preserving life.[4]

The reference to turning into apes is obviously an anachronism influenced by the later commentators on the Qurʾān. This is a reference to the Qurʾān where the word 'apes' has been figuratively used meaning that they became abject and humiliated men.[5] There is no reference in Jewish literature to the conversion of Jews into apes because they profaned the Sabbath. Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 102/720), who is considered to be one of the great commentators on the Qurʾān and was a *tābiʿī* does not believe in the physical transformation of the Jews into apes.[6]

It would be reasonable to consider Kaʿb's speech to the B. Qurayẓah on the eve of their surrender as mainly imaginary or distorted by later tradition. Al-Wāqidī has provided an extended version with embellishments.[7] It seems Ibn Saʿd realized the impossibility of such an address and dropped the whole incident altogether from his account.

(v) After this imaginary exchange between Kaʿb b. Asad and the B. Qurayẓah, the Apostle was requested to send Abū Lubābah b.ʿAbd al-Mundhir for consultations. Abū Lubābah, when he arrived, was asked whether he thought the Jews should submit to the Apostle's judgment. "He said, 'Yes', and pointed with his hand to his throat, signifying slaughter. Abū Lubābah said, 'My feet had not moved from the spot before I knew that I had been false to God and

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 686.
[2] Margoliouth, *The Relations between Arab and Israelites* ..., p. 71.
[3] "Sabbath", *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, p. 336.
[4] Berakhof 61 b, Mishnah *Yoma* 8:7.
[5] "And surely, you have known the end of those amongst you, who transgressed in the matter of Sabbath. So we said to them "Be ye apes, despised", The Qurʾān, *Al-Baqarah*, 65.
[6] Ibn Kathīr, Vol. I, p. 104.
[7] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, pp. 501-3.

His Apostle'.[1] Ibn Hishām (not Ibn Isḥāq) quotes two verses from the Qurʾān about Abū Lubābah's indiscretion.[2] Both of the verses have been quoted in a doubtful context. The first verse: "O ye who believe! prove not false to Allāh and the Messenger, nor prove false to your trusts knowingly"[3] was not revealed at the time of the Battle of the *Aḥzāb*. It was revealed after the Battle of Badr (624/2).[4] The second verse quoted by Ibn Hishām is supposed to be about God's forgiveness of Abū Lubābah:

> And there are others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a good work with another that was evil. It may be that Allāh will turn to them with compassion, Surely Allāh is Most Forgiving, Merciful.[5]

The above verse was actually revealed after the expedition to Tabūk (9/630) and refers to those true believers who stayed behind without permission.[6]

(vi) Ibn Isḥāq reports that in the morning the B. Qurayẓah submitted to the Apostle's judgment and the Aws leapt up and said, "O Apostle, they are our allies, not allies of the Khazraj and you know how you recently treated the allies of our brethren". When the Aws spoke thus the Apostle said, "Will you be satisfied, O Aws, if one of your men pronounces judgment on them?" When they agreed, the Apostle said Saʿd b. Muʿādh was the man.[7]

Al-Wāqidī[8] and Ibn Saʿd[9] also report the B. Qurayẓah's surrender to the Apostle's judgment and the appointment of Saʿd as *ḥakam*. But Ibn Saʿd gives another report saying that they surrendered to the judgment of Saʿd.[10]

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 686; al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 506; Ibn Saʿd, Vol. II, p. 74.
[2] Ibn Hishām, pp. 686-87.
[3] The Qurʾān, *Al-Anfāl*, 27.
[4] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. II, p. 301. The verse was revealed after Hātib b. Abū Baltaʿah tried to send a letter to the Quraysh informing them of the Apostle's intended attack on them. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Vol. XIII, p. 480.
[5] The Qurʾān, *Al-Taubah*, 102.
[6] Abū Lubābah, according to Ibn ʿAbbās, was one of these true believers who had stayed away from the expedition to Tabūk with the Apostle's permission and this verse was sent down about these people. Ibn Kathīr, Vol. II, p. 385; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, Vol. XIV, pp. 447-453.
[7] Ibn Hishām, p. 688.
[8] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, pp. 509-10.
[9] Ibn Saʿd, Vol. II, pp. 74-75.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Both al-Bukhārī[1] and Muslim[2] give two contradictory reports, one saying that the B. Qurayẓah surrendered to Sa^{c}d's judgment and the other saying that they surrendered to the Apostle's judgment, who in turn appointed Sa^{c}d as *ḥakam*.

(vii) When the Apostle appointed Sa^{c}d as *ḥakam* his people came to him and said, "Deal kindly with our friends, for the Apostle has made you *ḥakam* for that very purpose". When they persisted Sa^{c}d said, "The time has come for Sa^{c}d in the cause of Allāh not to care for any man's censure". Hearing this clear pronouncement, some of the Aws went to the quarter of the B. ^{c}Abd al-Ashhal (the sub-tribe of the Aws to which Sa^{c}d belonged) and announced to them the death of the B. Qurayẓah.[3] Al-Wāqidī's account is similar to that of Ibn Isḥāq.[4] Ibn Sa^{c}d has dropped the whole story of the intercession by the Aws on the B. Qurayẓah's behalf. But he has referred to Sa^{c}d's prayer that he might live till he had the pleasure of seeing the end of the B. Qurayẓah.[5]

(viii) After this announcement of the approaching death of the B. Qurayẓah to the people of the B. ^{c}Abd al-Ashhal and Sa^{c}d's prayer to have the pleasure of seeing the B. Qurayẓah's end, the umpire arrives at the scene and asks the *Anṣār*, according to Ibn Isḥāq, "Do you covenant by Allāh that you accept the judgment I pronounce on them?' They said, 'Yes', and he said, 'And is it incumbent on the one who is here?" (looking) in the direction of the Apostle not mentioning him out of respect, and the Apostle answered, "Yes".[6] Al-Wāqidī[7] gives a similar account but Ibn Sa^{c}d has dropped it.

(ix) Sa^{c}d's judgment was that *"the men*[8] should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives".[9]

(x) After the judgment has been given Ibn Isḥāq quotes on the authority of ^{c}Āsim b. ^{c}Umar b. Qatādah who told him that the Apostle

[1] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Chapter "Return of the Apostle from *Al-Aḥzāb*", Vol. V, pp. 143-44.

[2] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Lahore, n.d.), *Ḥadīth* No. 245 and 246, Vol. II, Kitāb al-Jihād, pp. 1112, 1113.

[3] Ibn Hishām, pp. 688-9.

[4] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, pp. 510-11.

[5] Ibn Sa^{c}d, Vol. II, p. 77.

[6] Ibn Hishām, p. 689.

[7] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 512.

[8] فانى أحكم فيهم ان تقتل الرجال Ibn Hishām, p. 689.

[9] Ibn Hishām, p. 689.

said to Sa^{c}d, "You have given the judgment of Allāh above the seven heavens".[1]

(xi) The Apostle went out to the market and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches. There were 600 to 900.[2]

The inner contradictions in the above account cannot be reconciled. To sum up Ibn Isḥāq's account, the fate of the B. Qurayẓah was already decided by the Apostle: Abū Lubābah already knew it and having revealed it inflicted upon himself a self-imposed punishment. Sa^{c}d b.Mu^{c}ādh wished to live till he had avenged the B. Qurayẓah's treachery and when approached by the Aws he made it clear that in the cause of Allāh he did not care for any man's censure. Furthermore he is the same Sa^{c}d who had gone to the B. Qurayẓah before the Battle of the *Aḥzāb* and when the Jews told him they had no agreement or understanding with the Apostle he "reviled them and they reviled him. He was a man of hasty temper and Sa^{c}d b. ^{c}Ubādah said to him, 'Stop insulting them, for the dispute between us is too serious for recrimination,".[3] The Tradition reported by Abū Sa^{c}īd al-Khudrī and given by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim is very difficult to accept; it means that the B. Qurayẓah surrendered on the condition that the man who so recently reviled them and was praying for vengeance should be appointed their judge. They were inviting a death sentence. It may be noted that the first two reporters Abū Sa^{c}īd al-Khudrī and Abū Umāmah were Anṣarī and were more interested in reporting the status of Sa^{c}d. This *Ḥadīth* is *shādhdh*. and *ijmālī*. Ibn Ḥajar has unsuccessfully tried to reconcile its apparent contradiction with ^{c}Ā$^{\circ}$ishah's report by quoting Ibn Isḥāq's account.[4] By the time Sa^{c}d arrived to judge, the news of his intention to sentence them to death had reached the quarter of ^{c}Abd al-Ashhal and yet he goes through the formalities of asking the Aws if they would accept his judgment and these very people who had asked for kind treatment for the B. Qurayẓah, instead of denouncing him as prejudiced and as having disqualified himself as an impartial judge, say "Yes". Afterwards he asks the Apostle the same question and the Apostle, whose intentions were known to Abū Lubābh, who in turn had disclosed them to the B.Qurayẓah, says, "Yes." If Ibn Isḥāq's account is correct, one is obliged

[1] Ibn Hisham, p. 689.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 689-90.
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 675.
[4] *Supra*, pp. 77-78, sub para. (vi).

to conclude that Sa^{c}d's judgment was prearranged.* It is not without reason that Caetani has questioned the whole account of Sa^{c}d's selection by the B. Qurayẓah as *ḥakam*.[1] The evidence is contradictory and mutually exclusive.

It is not within the purview of a historian's task to express an opinion on Muhammad's claim to prophethood, but the belief of the Aws and Sa^{c}d b. Mu^{c}ādh in his prophethood is a historical fact. The Aws and for that matter all the Muslims of Medina, who supposedly saw Abū Lubābah bound to one of the pillars in the mosque for being "false to God and his Apostle"[2] and heard Sa^{c}d praying for vengeance watched this "simulated justice",* and yet there was not one who questioned it.

The account given by Ibn Isḥāq, without his usual phrases of qualification such as *za^{c}ama* or *dhukira li* or concluding remarks "God knows best", is rather unusual; it does not comply with his own standard of caution and scrupulousness.

As we have seen earlier the incident concerning Abū Lubābah's self-imposed punishment does not fit into the context. It must be rejected. "The story as we have it" Watt rightly points out, "must have been manipulated".[3] The B. Qurayẓah's choice of Sa^{c}d as *ḥakam* does not stand to reason. Sa^{c}d was not ^{c}Abd Allāh b. Ubayy; there is not a single incident in his life which shows that the B. Qurayẓah could depend on him in the way the B. Qaynuqā^{c} did on ^{c}Abd Allāh b. Ubayy. His loyalty to the Apostle and the cause of Islam was beyond doubt. Ibn Isḥāq's report that the Apostle appointed Sa^{c}d as the judge is supported not only by al-Wāqidī but also by Ibn Sa^{c}d. Above all it has the authority of al-Bukhārī's second *Ḥadīth* which is *marfū^{c}* being reported by ^{c}Ā$^{\circ}$ishah, who was an eye witness of the whole affair. It seems to be more in line with the practice of the Apostle. In the absence of positive law during the earlier days of his stay in Medina the Apostle had adopted a policy of punishing a criminal through his kinsmen; it was based on two sound principles: there would be no tribal war of vengeance, and secondly it would be known that Islam had broken all tribal ties. Silkān b. Salāmah b. Waqsh, who had conspired with Muḥammad b. Maslamah in killing

* نعوذ بالله من ذالك

[1] Caetani, *Annali dell' Islam*, Vol. I, p. 632.

[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 686.

[3] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 188.

Kaᶜb b. al-Ashraf, was Kaᶜb's foster brother.[1] ᶜAṣmāᵓ bint Marwān who was married to a man of B. Khatmah was killed by ᶜUmayr b. ᶜAdiy al-Khaṭmī[2] and Abū ᶜAfak who belonged to the B. ᶜAmr b. ᶜAwf of the B. ᶜUbaydah clan was killed by Sālim b. ᶜUmayr of the B. ᶜAmr b. ᶜAwf.[3] All these three were killed by their own kinsmen, with the approval of the Apostle, for fomenting trouble between the Muslims and the pagans and for whipping up hatred against the Apostle. It would therefore have been natural that if the B. Qurayẓah were to be judged they should be judged by a man from their *ḥalīf*, the Aws.

Ibn Saᶜd with his usual caution has dropped Ibn Isḥāq's and al-Wāqidī's story of Saᶜd's remarks that the time had come for him in the cause of Allāh not to care for any man's censure, Saᶜd's ceremonial request for a pledge from the Aws and the Apostle to abide by his ruling, and the story of the Aws' intercession with Saᶜd on behalf of the B. Qurayẓah. Obviously they added ornament to the narrative of a story-teller, but divested it of the reliability of a historian's account.

Now the actual sentencing. According to Ibn Isḥāq, Saᶜd said "the men should be killed".[4] In another report Ibn Isḥāq says that "the Apostle had ordered that every adult of theirs should be killed.[5] This report rests on the authority of ᶜAṭīyah al-Quraẓi, who was a boy at the time of the B. Qurayẓah's surrender. Both of these reports are of doubtful authority. According to al-Wāqidī "those should be killed over whom the razor had passed".[6] Ibn Saᶜd has given two reports; in one he has followed al-Wāqidī's wording[7] and in the second he says, "their fighting men should be killed".[8] Al-Bukhārī has given two reports of the incident. In both of them Saᶜd b. Muᶜādh is reported to have used the word "fighting men"[9]

1 Ibn Hishām, p. 551.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 996.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 995.
4 فانى أحكم فيهم ان تقتل الرجال Ibn Hishām, p. 698.
5 كان رسول الله صلعم قد أمر أن يقتل من بنى قريظه كل من أنبت *Ibid.*, p. 69.
6 فانى أحكم فيهم أن يقتل من جرت عليه الموسى Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 512.
7 Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 75.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 77. فحكم فيهم أن تقتل مقاتلتهم
9 مقاتل Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-Muf-radāt fī Gharīb al-Qurᵓān* (Cairo, n.d.), see under قتل pp. 593-94; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ᶜArab*, (Beyrouth, 1956) Vol. II, pp. 547-52.

and not adult. According to the first report he said :

'Slay their fighting men and take captive their families'.[1]

In the second report, he said :

'Slay the fighting men and take captive their women and children'.[2]

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has also given two reports using the same word, *muqātil*, that al-Bukhārī used.[3]

Ibn Isḥāq's second report, that every adult should be killed, may be ruled out first. There is general consensus that the Apostle in the case of the B. Qurayẓah did not give any orders. The first order to 'kill all men" is neither in keeping with the Traditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim nor with the second report of Ibn Sa°d. Al-Wāqidī's wording is more colourful but not exact. Since old men cannot be killed[4] the killing was limited to *muqātil*, the fighting men.

According to Ibn Isḥāq, 600 to 900 men of the B. Qurayẓah were executed. It is not known what was the total strength of the B. Qurayẓah. If each family is taken to consist of six persons—and this is a low average—3,600 to 5,400 men, women and children must have surrendered. They were all confined in the house of Bint al-Ḥārith, a woman of the B. al-Najjār, and bound with ropes. Incarceration of four to five thousand persons can create problems even in a large town in the present age of crime, police and jails. If Ibn Isḥāq is to be believed, Medina must have been a very well-organized town which could provide detention arrangements for such a large number of prisoners. How much rope was used and what was the area of Bint al-Ḥārith's house? Were the prisoners fed? What sanitary arrangements were provided for such a large number of people in a town where there were no toilets and even women went out in the darkness for such necessities.[5] None of these prisoners tried to

[1] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Chapter "Return of the Apostle from *Al-Aḥzāb* and his expedition to the B. Qurayẓah and their siege". Vol. V, p. 143.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[3] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth* No. 245 and 246, Vol. II, pp 1112 and 1113.

[4] "Do not kill old people, children, young ones and women", Abū Dā°ūd, "Kitāb al-Jihād", Vol. II, p. 342.

[5] °Ā°ishah reports: "We did not have those privies which foreigners have in their houses; we loathe and detest them; our practice was to get out into the open spaces of Medina". Ibn Hishām, p. 733. Al-Bukhārī also gives a similar report from °A°ishah, Chapter "Ḥadīth al-Ifk," Book V, p. 150.

escape and the Muslims seem to have no difficulty in locking up these tame prisoners. Ibn Isḥāq reports again without clear *isnād*, "Then the Apostle went out to the market and dug trenches in it".[1]

Ibn Isḥāq has used the words *fakhandaqa bihā khanādiqa*.[2] It is interesting that al-Wāqidī has dropped this wording and instead used the words *fa amara bikhudūdin*.[3] The word *khudūd* for trench is of a doubtful nature[4], but al-Wāqidī, obviously, used it because some of the classical commentators of the Qurʾān consider that the *aṣḥāb al-ukhdūd*[5] were the Christians of Najrān who were massacred by the Jewish king Dhū Nuwās. Most probably al-Wāqidī was aware of the role of the Jews of Yathrib in inciting Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās to make war against Najrān.[6]

ʿAlī and Zubayr were the executioners, and the prisoners were brought in batches.[7] Ibn Isḥāq says :

> As they were taken out in batches to the Apostle they asked Kaʿb what he thought would be done with them. He replied, "Will you never understand? Don't you see that the summoner never stops and those who are taken away do not return? By Allāh it is death!"[8]

These are the people who had surrendered to the judgment of Saʿd who had condemned all the adult males to be executed. It seemed they knew nothing about this sentence of death. But the woman who was sitting with ʿĀʾishah as the "Apostle was killing her men", and was laughing a great deal, knew that she was to be killed. When her name was suddenly called ʿĀʾishah cried, "What is the matter?" 'I am to be killed', she replied." "ʿĀʾishah used to say", Ibn Isḥāq continues, 'I shall never forget her cheerfulness and her great laugh, when all the time she knew that she was to be killed'.[9]

Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab died bravely and al-Zâbir b. Bāṭā al-Qurazī refused to take advantage of the pardon given to him and his family.

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 689.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 689-90.
[3] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 513.
[4] R.B. Serjeant, *"Ukhdūd"*, *BSOAS*, XXII (1959), p. 572.
[5] Ibn Kathīr, Vol. IV, pp. 494-95.
[6] Irfan Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najrân: New Documents*, p. 268.
[7] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 513.
[8] Ibn Hishām, p. 690.
[9] Ibn Hishām, pp. 690-91. The story must be rejected; neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim who report from ʿĀʾishah have accepted it.

The same people who cowardly refused to fight on a Sabbath and in spite of being safe in their castles had lost their morale, died as heroes. None of the 900 wavered or accepted Islam even in the face of death.

It has all the common features of a religious massacre, even though the account has been provided by the partisans of the perpetrators of the slaughter.

1. The victims were outnumbered by their opponents; (Najrān and Masada);
2. They lost because of treachery;
3. There are always some who stand out as heroes (Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, Zābir b. Bāṭā°);
4. There are no waverers and no forced converts;
5. Few are left to give the details of the horror.

And like most massacres it is not true to life.

The first part of Ibn Isḥāq's story gives us a picture of demoralized people trying to avoid fighting at any cost; the second part paints for us a picture of heroes ready to die for their faith. Walking in a flowered robe in which he had made holes so that no one might take it as spoil, Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab addressed the Apostle:

> By God, I do not blame myself for opposing you, but he who forsakes God will be forsaken.

The discrepancies in Ibn Isḥāq's account do not end here. The B. Qurayẓah lived at a six to seven hours' walking distance from Medina.[1] On surrender they were brought to Medina and kept in a house. The next morning trenches were dug in the market place to bury the executed people. It is surprising that a general of the Apostle's astute knowledge of strategy and logistics would have brought nearly five thousand captives—nine hundred of them to be slain—all the way to Medina and bury them right in the middle of the town. It would have been far better, safer and more efficient to make short shrift of them outside their forts, and then to take only the women and children to Medina. The problem of the security of prisoners, and of sanitation in Medina, would have been solved. If they had to be marched to Medina then there was a ready-made trench which was dug outside Medina only a month back. It was not far.

[1] According to Ibn Isḥāq, the Muslims left Medina at noontime and reached the B. Qurayẓah after the last evening prayers. Ibn. Hishām, p. 685.

Since the captives included women, children, and old and sick people they must have walked to Medina at a much slower pace—ten to eleven hours. Neither during this march nor during their captivity in the house of Bint al-Hārith did any incident take place. No one tried to escape except ʿAmr b. Suʿdā al-Quraẓī, and no one accepted Islam to save his life except Rifāʿa b. Samawʾal al-Quraẓī. It was both a tame and a brave crowd. If the story is true the martyrs who fell under Bar Kochba (A.D. 132) against overwhelming odds were nothing in comparison to the martyrs of the B. Qurayẓah.

The disposal of nine hundred bodies did not seem to have posed any problems. The trenches neatly dug were filled by the same night.

There was apparently a complete absence of any sentiment among the Muslims who watched this execution. It must have been a shattering experience for many and an unforgettable event even for those who thought it to be fully justified. Several heart-rending incidents must have taken place during the day; some must have tried to struggle and run, others would have uttered words of dismay and repentence, and there must have been many who either did not die at the first blow, or died of fright even before the executioner's sword struck. Swords must have blunted and broken. ʿAlī and Zubayr, who were the executioners, must have faced several problems, and witnessed many facets of human nature on that day. But neither ʿAlī nor Zubayr, in fact no one, ever later mentioned anything about his experience of this execution.

A detailed scrutiny indicates that the whole story of this massacre is of a very doubtful nature. As Ibn Khaldūn has pointed out "the rule of distinguishing what is true from what is false in history is based on its possibility or impossibility".[1] We have already pointed out that Medina in the Apostle's time was not equipped to imprison four to five thousand people and execute 600 to 900 people in a day. Killing such a large number of people and disposing of the dead bodies created problems even for Nazi Germany, with hydrogen cyanide[2] as an efficient lethal agent. A massacre in the midst of a town where people live is very different from a massacre in a town which is being sacked by a conquering army marching onwards from town to town with dead bodies left to make it uninhabitable.

[1] *Vide* R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Repr. Cambridge, 1966), p. 438.

[2] Raul Hilberg, ed. *Documents of Destruction: Germany and Jewry 1933-1945* (Chicago, 1971), p. 219.

Under these conditions it is almost impossible that the people of Medina should have escaped typhoid, typhus, both epidemic and endemic, influenza, diarrhoea and above all cholera. As regards the dead bodies the infection would depend on the animals and birds having access to the remains. But even if there were only flies, and the people whose corpses were lying there had all been healthy, the proliferation of agents, especially bacterial agents, after death would have been a health hazard, since the healthy may be carriers of dangerous diseases such as meningococcus.

Discussing the mass execution of the B. Qurayẓah under "the alleged moral failures" of the Apostle, Watt has remarked :

> This may seem incredible to the European, but that is in itself a measure of remoteness of the moral ideals of ancient Arabia from our own.[1]

But the effect of such a mass execution on the spectators and executioners is not related to moral values—ancient or modern. The human psyche, as is well known to students of psychology, may have nothing to do with a sense of duty, or political and religious obligations. Executioners, grave diggers, undertakers deal with death in the ordinary course of life as an honest and moral profession, nevertheless this continuous association with death creates suffering and terror of blood guilt.[2] No one could come out of such a holocaust—600 to 900 killed in cold blood in one day—without damage to his personality. ᶜAlī and Zubayr's holocaust legacy of massive deadness would not have left them in peace. Though Zubayr's life is not fully known to us, we do know well enough about the life of the fourth Caliph of Islam. His sermons, letters, political discourses and sayings collected in *Nahj al-Balāghah* do not reflect experience of such a mass execution. His scruples in "retaliation", among other aspects of his personality, "cannot be disregarded for the understanding that it affords of his psychology".[3] After his victory at 'the camel', "he tried to relieve the distress of the vanquished by preventing the enslavement of their women and children, in face of the protests of a group of his partisans; when battles ended, he showed his grief, wept for the dead, and even prayed over his enemies".[4] ᶜAlī was a brave soldier, not a

[1] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 327.
[2] Barbara Levy, *Legacy of Death* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1974).
[3] L. Veccia Vaglieri, "ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2) Vol. I, p. 385.
[4] *Ibid.*

hard-hearted executioner. ᶜAlī's partner in the execution, al-Zubayr b. al-ᶜAwwām, was also renowned for gallantry and took part in all the great battles and campaigns of the Apostle's lifetime. The very idea of such a massacre by persons who neither before nor after the killing showed any sign of a dehumanised personality is inadmissible from a psychological point of view.

To write history, one must know how to count.[1] Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Saᶜd could not only count, but took care, wherever possible, to check their information. But they were writing approximately two centuries after the event and had no way of checking the number of people executed. Six hundred to nine hundred, given by Ibn Isḥāq, is an impressionistic round figure. There was no method of taking a tribal census at that time. Circumstantial evidence such as tax figures, *jizyah* and *kharāj* accounts and the register of pension payments to the Companions were introduced in ᶜUmar's time. Nabia Abbott[2] in discussing the number of Muslim martyrs of Biᵓr Maᶜūnah (4/625) pointed out that Ibn Isḥāq gave the number of people sent to Biᵓr Maᶜūnah by the Apostle as forty.[3] Ibn Ḥanbal[4] and al-Bukhārī[5] however reported seventy, which is now accepted. According to Ibn Ḥabīb[6], however, the number of the missionaries who went was thirty. Since the whole party was massacred and only one companion was left alive, sixty-nine companions were killed. But al-Wāqidī lists only sixteen. Ibn Saᶜd has not given any list, but taking account of all the entries in Ibn Saᶜd one cannot arrive at a figure of more than twenty slain. There is a discrepancy of forty-nine. Even if the conservative figure of Ibn Isḥāq is taken into account, there is a fifty per cent exaggeration.

Kister, who has collected all the available versions of the incident and analysed them, has reached the conclusion that the Apostle sent

[1] Georges Lefebvre's dictum, *Pour faire de l'histoire, il faut savoir compter*, quoted by David Thompson, *The Aims of History* (London, 1969), p. 84. (Cf.) Ibn Khaldūn: "It is the common desire for sensationalism, the ease with which one may just mention a higher figure, and the disregard of reviewers and critics". The *Muqaddimah* tr. by Franz Rosenthal (Rev. ed., Princeton, 1970), p. 13.

[2] Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, I, pp. 76-77.

[3] Ibn Hishām, pp. 648-49.

[4] Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad* (6 volumes, Cairo, 1895), Vol. III, p. 196.

[5] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, III, p. 91.

[6] Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, (Hyderabad, 1942), p. 118.

a group of fourteen companions, who were later joined by four more men.[1]

One finds the same tendency to exaggerate when dealing with the Jewish persecution of the Christians of Najrān, who were probably punished for the so-called treason during the first Abyssinan invasion of the Jewish kingdom of Yemen.[2] The number of Christian martyrs according to Simeon of Beth Arsham, who received the information from "those who came from Najrān" was two thousand.[3] Bell considers that a "moderate number" of 200 seems to be more correct.[4] Baron considers "that some probably minor local persecution was exaggerated".[5] "The entire account is so completely legendary" says Graetz "that it is impossible to discover any historical fact".[6]

"The simplest answer", Nabia Abbott suggests, "would be to dismiss it as one more example of a well-known and widespread phenomenon, namely that relayed numbers tend to grow and multiply with time."[7]

It is significant that neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim reported any Tradition on the actual execution of Sa^{c}d's judgment. Since they did not report how Sa^{c}d's judgment was carried out they also did not report on the number of people killed or taken prisoner.

The story that the captive women and children of the B. Qurayẓah were sent to the Najd to be sold for horses and weapons does not agree with the practice.[8] The Jews always bought their captives from Arabs after every skirmish.[9] The Jews of Khaybar, including the B. al-Naḍīr, Wādī al-Qura, Taymā$^{\circ}$, and even Medina itself were capable of buying these captives and, as al-Wāqidī says, they bought them.[10] The Muslims, if interested in the money at all, were interested in it to buy weapons and horses. It made no difference to them if the captives were sold in the Najd or Khaybar. In fact it seemed to be far

[1] M.J. Kister, "The Expedition of Bi$^{\circ}$r Ma^{c}ūnah", *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of Hamilton A.R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden, 1965), pp. 337-57.
[2] The date of the massacre is controversial; See Irfan Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najrān*, pp. 235-42.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[4] Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London, 1926), p. 38.
[5] Baron, Vol. III, p. 67.
[6] Graetz, Vol. III, p. 65.
[7] Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, I, p. 77.
[8] Ibn Hishām, p. 693.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 253.
[10] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, pp. 522-24.

more convenient to sell them in the Ḥijāz than to travel with such a large number of captives to the Najd.

Finally, according to Ibn Isḥāq, the Apostle divided the property of the B. Qurayẓah among the Muslims. "On that day he declared the shares of horses and men, and took out the *khums* (the fifth). A horseman received three shares, two for the horse and one for the rider; a man without a horse got one share.... It was the first booty on which lots were cast and the *khums* was taken. According to the precedent set on this occasion, divisions were made, and it became the custom for raids".[1] In view of considerable controversy on the share of a horseman Ibn Isḥāq's report assumes great importance because it sets two precedents regarding the spoil of war: the share of the horseman and the procedure of casting lots on the booty and taking the *khums*. Abū Ḥanīfa gives one share to the rider and one to the horse, while al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774) gives one to the rider and two to the horse. Imām Shāfiʿī (150/767-204/820) has dealt with the subject and quoted several authorities on the question without any reference to Ibn Isḥāq's reports.[2] Abū Yūsuf[3] (d. 182/798), one of the founders of the Ḥanafī school of law, in his well-known treatise on public finance, taxation and other related matters, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, also does not mention the share of the horseman fixed on the defeat of the B. Qurayẓah. As regards *khums*, Abū Yūsuf is quite categorical: no *khums* was taken from the property of the B. Qurayẓah.[4] Yaḥya b. Ādam,[5] writing his *Kitāb al-Kharāj* approximately twenty years after Abū Yūsuf and dealing with the same subject does not mention the B. Qurayẓah at all. Imām Shāfiʿī, Abū Yūsuf and Yaḥya b. Ādam, who were compiling judicial works based on authentic traditions and well-established precedents, did not consider either Ibn Isḥāq's account or the current *qāṣṣ* material reliable.[6]

Ibn Isḥāq's account of the punishment of the B. Qurayẓah is a plethora of self-contradictory statements. So are the accounts of

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 692-93. Al-Wāqidī has expanded it into more than four pages (Vol. II, pp. 521-22). Ibn Saʿd has not mentioned anything about the property of the B. Qurayẓah.

[2] Shāfiʿī, *Kitāb al-Umm*, Vol. VII, pp. 337-342.

[3] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, XIV, pp. 242 ff. Ibn Khallikān, No. 834.

[4] Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Cairo, 1346 A.H.), p. 81.

[5] *Supra*, Chapter III.

[6] It confirms the view expressed earlier that most of Ibn Isḥāq's account is not based on al-Zuhrī. Abū Yūsuf frequently quotes al-Zuhrī in his book.

al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa^{c}d. The account as given by them is untrustworthy both in detail and substance. Fortunately Ibn Isḥāq has left some telltale references which help us to reconstruct the incident in conformity with the information which the Qur^{c}ān gives on the subject. Since an author, writing with a bias is more likely to be unguarded and truthful in his casual reference, we could perhaps rely more on the evidence adduced in the following disquisition. Since "Arab culture was basically oral, and poetry was its documentary evidence and the best means of preserving traditions",[1] we shall look into some of the verses which Ibn Isḥāq has preserved and Ibn Hishām has not rejected as spurious.

On the day of Qurayẓah, by which Ibn Isḥāq seems to mean the last day of their siege, the battle was probably heavy. Three Muslims lost their lives on that day.[2] It is not known how many men of the B. Qurayẓah died in the battle. The fighting must have been fierce. Hassān b. Thābit said:

> Qurayẓa met their misfortune
> And in humiliation found no helper,
> A calamity worse than that which fell B. al-Naḍīr befell them
> With fresh horses bearing horsemen like hawks.
> We left them with the blood upon them like a pool
> They having accomplished nothing.
> They lay prostrate with vultures circling round them.[3]

After their defeat they surrendered to the Apostle. A party (*farīq*)[4] from among them who had fought but not taken a leading part was taken prisoner.[5] The leaders of the B. Qurayẓah were, however, left to the judgment of Sa^{c}d b. Mu^{c}ādh. There are indications that the sentencing of these leaders was done right on the spot. As al-Samhūdī has pointed out, Sa^{c}d was brought to the Qurayẓah mosque

[1] A.A. Duri, "The Iraqi School of History to the Ninth Century—A Sketch", *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. by Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (London. 1962), p. 47.

[2] Ibn Hishām, pp. 699-700.

[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 712, Guillaume's translation.

[4] Rāghib, see under *farq* "a company of men apart from others" الجماعة المتفرقة عن آخرين. Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1863) Book I, Part 6, p. 2385, *farīq*, "party more in number or larger than *firqah*, which means 'a party, portion, division sect or distinct body or class of men.' Ibn Manzūr, Vol. X, p. 300, "*firqah* is party of men and *farīq* is larger than *firqah*".

[5] The Qur^{c}ān, *Al-Aḥzāb*, 26, "You took a party captive".

and not to the mosque of Medina.[1] The *Ḥadīth* in both al-Bukhārī and Muslim suggests that Sa^{c}d, who was mortally wounded in the battle, went to a mosque. His tent was so close to the Apostle's mosque in Medina that in his grave condition it was not necessary to bring him there. Sa^{c}d decreed that the combatants from among the leaders should be executed. Probably the main leaders included old men and ordained priests, who were not combatants, hence the word 'combatants'. This party (*fariq*) was not brought to Medina, but was beheaded[2] at the spot. The leaders, Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, Ka^{c}b b. Asad[3], Nabbāsh b. Qays and Ghazzāl b. Samaw$^{\prime}$al[4] were executed by ^{c}Alī and Zubayr.[5] In conformity with the policy adopted by the Apostle that executions should be carried out by a member of the tribe who is in alliance with the tribe of the guilty party minor leaders were handed over to the Aws. Two of the condemned were given to each of the clans or sub-clans of the Aws; (i) ^{c}Abd al-Ashhal; (ii) Ḥārithah; (iii) Zafar; (iv) Mu^{c}āwiyah; (v) ^{c}Amar b. ^{c}Awf; and (vi) Umayyah b. Zayd, so that all the clans were involved in the blood of the B. Qurayẓah.[6] The culpable leadership of a tribe of 600 to 900 men; especially when some of them have already been killed in the battle and one group has been taken captive would not normally exceed sixteen, or seventeen accounted for in the above analysis. The decision to help the *Aḥzāb* must have been taken by the leaders and the elders of the B. Qurayẓah. The whole tribe could not be given the same punishment that was in store for their leaders. The Apostle himself was bound by the Qur$^{\prime}$ānic maxim of just retribution; "an eye for an eye and a life for a life."[7] This principle, as we have shown earlier[8], had been agreed upon both by the Muslims and the Jews, for we find it formalized in the *Ṣaḥīfah:* "a person acquires guilt against himself."[9]

[1] Al-Samhūdī, Vol. III, p. 824. The place where the Apostle prayed during the siege was converted into a mosque.
[2] The Qur$^{\prime}$ān, *Al-Aḥzāb*, 26, "You slew a party".
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 690.
[4] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 516.
[5] Al-Wāqidī, p. 513.
[6] Ibn Hishām, p. 554. Al-Wāqidī, pp. 515-16.
[7] The Qur$^{\prime}$ān, *Al-Baqarah*, 178.
[8] *Supra*, Chapter II.
[9] Ibn Hishām, p. 344.

The Qur'ān mentions only two groups which were punished: one was executed and the other was taken captive. Unfortunately Ibn Isḥāq and other *maghāzī* writers were not interested in those members of the B. Qurayẓah who were not punished. Some of them might have stayed and others (as Jabal b. Jawwāl al-Tha'labī said) might have migrated:

O Sa'd, Sa'd of B. Mu'ādh,
For what befell Qurayẓah and al-Naḍīr.
By thy life, Sa'd of B. Mu'ādh
The day they departed was indeed steadfast.[1]

In the whole affair of the B. Qurayẓah Sa'd b. Mu'ādh plays the most important role, and the account of his appointment as the judge is the most controversial and confusing element in it, as we have noted earlier. The *sīrah* writers generally agree that the Apostle appointed him as a judge to satisfy the Aws; out of the two reports al-Bukhārī and Muslim give, one agrees with the *sīrah* writers and the other says that the B. Qurayẓah surrendered to Sa'd b. Mu'ādh's judgment. The reports of his appearance on the scene as the judge seem to be concerned with details regarding his personal status and standing; when the Apostle called Sa'd b. Mu'ādh *Sayyid*, a chief, did he mean *Sayyid* of the *Anṣār* only or the *Muhājirūn* as well; how did the Apostle describe the sentence pronounced by Sa'd: did he compare his sentence with the judgment of Allāh, the angel, or the King?[2] While the controversy throws some light on dissent and friction among the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*, the significance of the whole episode seems to lie elsewhere. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) commenting on the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* report of Sa'd's judgment says:

In their disputes Muslims are allowed to resort to *taḥkīm*. There is general consensus on this principle; *Khawārij*, however, do not accept it. The *Ḥadīth* also establishes

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 713. Guillaume's translation.

[2] See W. Montgomery Watt, "The Condemnation of the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah", *The Muslim World*, XLII (3 July, 1952), pp. 160-171 for the different versions of the reports about Sa'd's appointment as *ḥakam*. The heading of Watt's learned article though not incorrect is misleading; it deals partly with Caetani's charge that "the tradition has tried to remove from Muḥammad the direct responsibility for the inhuman massacre" of the B. Qurayẓah and partly considers how Schacht's "methods and conclusions (in *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*) affect the study of historical traditions". He has not dealt either with Sa'd's judgment, its execution, or the events leading to the "massacre".

the principle that once a *ḥakam* has given his judgment it will be enforced, it is not possible for any one to disobey it, although before the judgment is pronounced, one can refuse to abide by it.[1]

For Abū Yūsuf also the importance of the B. Qurayẓah incident lies in *taḥkīm*. He gives it under the rules of *taḥkīm*.[2] The only time *taḥkīm* became a matter of controversy between Muslims was when arbitrators were appointed on behalf of ᶜAlī and Muᶜâwiyah at Ṣiffīn. While the *Khawārij* protested against *taḥkīm* ᶜAlī did not repudiate the convention of Ṣiffīn. As it is well-known, Muᶜâwiyah gained by the result of the arbitration. It is not necessary to repeat the main events here, but it is possible that the *Ḥadīth* of Saᶜd's judgment of the B. Qurayẓah strengthened the Umayyad's cause. Had this precedent sought to be established by Saᶜd's judgment been really authentic, it would certainly have appeared during the controversy between ᶜAlī and the *Khawārij*. Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr has reported in full the debate which took place between ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAbbās and the *Khawārij* on the question of *taḥkīm* in *Jāmiᶜ Bayān al-ᶜIlm wa Faḍlihī*[3], but there is no reference to Saᶜd's appointment as *ḥakam* in that debate. The story as reported by Ibn Isḥāq and others had not been forged by then.

It is reasonable to conclude that a minor and unimportant incident in which probably Saᶜd b. Muᶜādh was involved in dealing with the B. Qurayẓah was blown up out of proportion by pro-Umayyad Tradition collectors. In course of time while the *taḥkīm* controversy became irrelevant due to the Abbasid revolution, the reason for investing this minor incident with the force of an important precedent was also forgotten. The incident of the B. Qurayẓah[4] occurred before the armistice of Ḥudaybiyah and the peace with Khaybar were achieved. It is impossible that the pagans and the *munāfiqūn* would have remained muted. When Jaḥsh violated the sacred month and shed blood therein, when the palms of the B. al-Naḍīr were burnt, when the Apostle married the divorced wife of his adopted son, the people criticised and the Qurᵓān defended the Apostle.[5] It is improbable that the Apostle's critics would have paid less attention to the lives of the B. Qurayẓah

[1] Al-Nawawī's commentary on the margin of *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*, Vol. II, pp. 1112-13.
[2] Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, pp. 238-40.
[3] (Cairo, 1320 A.H.) pp. 162-63.
[4] Ibn Hishām, pp. 423-27.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 654.

than to the palms of the B. al-Naḍīr. That the news of this "massacre" did not reach Syria, which included Jerusalem and Adhraʿāt, with which the Medina Jews had contacts, and the Exilarchate in Iraq, which exercised religious authority over them, is highly unlikely.

The *Ṣaḥīfah* gives the names of seven Jewish tribes who became part of the *ummah*"[1]. Ibn Isḥāq gives us two additional names.[2] Unfortunately the *maghāzī*-writers, the jurists and the *Ḥadīth* collectors have left no information about these Jews. They showed interest only in the three Jewish clans who either joined the *munāfiqūn* of Medina or the Quraysh of Mecca or both in opposing the Apostle, and even that interest was limited to their conflict with the Muslims. As soon as the conflict was over they lost interest in them as well.

[1] See Chapter II for the definition of the '*ummah*', in the context of this document.

[2] *Supra*, Chapter II.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST ENCOUNTER

... the hot-bed of anti-Muslim intrigue at Khaybar.

— MAXIME RODINSON

After the banishment of the B. al-Naḍīr from Medina and the discomfiture of the B. Qurayẓah, Khaybar assumed great importance. The B. al-Naḍīr settled there after their expulsion from Medina and made it the centre of their activities to avenge their expulsion from Medina. The Jewish poet Sammāk warned the Muslims :

Haply time and the change of fortune
Will take revenge from 'the just and righteous one'[1]
For killing al-Naḍīr and their confederates
And for cutting down the palms, their dates ungathered
Unless I die we will come at you with lances
And every sharp sword that we have
In the hand of a brave man who protects himself.
When he meets his adversary he kills him.
With the army is Ṣakhr[2] and his fellows.
When he attacks he is no weakling
Like a lion in Tarj protecting his covert,
Lord of the thicket, crushing his prey enormous.[3]

But Ṣakhr had been defeated in the Battle of *al-Aḥzāb* and the B. Qurayẓah had also been expelled from Medina, while their leaders—including Kaʿb b. Asad and Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, the leader of the B. al-Naḍīr (and the father-in-law of Kinānāh b. al-Rabīʿ b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq)—had been executed. The recent defeat of the Confederates, whom the Jewish leaders had collected after a great diplomatic effort, had created a critical situation for the Jewish leadership. The Jews

[1] العادل و المنصف , a sarcastic reference to the Apostle.
[2] Abū Sufyān.
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 658. Guillaume's translation.

of Medina having lost influence and power, it was now up to the Jews of Khaybar to salvage what was left of their prestige and above all to find a *modus vivendi* with the rising power of Islam. They had several advantages. Khaybar unlike Yathrib was a homogeneous state of Jews and was thus free from Arab alliances and tribal feuds. It was rich, its strongholds were self-contained, and it could stand a long siege. It could either negotiate a peace with the Apostle from a position of strength or become a garrison state, an Arabian Sparta, to ensure survival. If history was any guide, it would be self-defeating, for its lines of communications were not safe for all time. The tribes which were hostile to Islam could change sides. The Meccans had already signed a peace treaty with the Apostle.

Abū Rāfiᶜ Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, who succeeded Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, made lavish though judicious use of the B. al-Naḍīr's wealth to induce the neighbouring Arabs and especially the strong tribe of Ghaṭafān to join the Jews of Khaybar against the Muslims. Finally he succeeded in collecting a large army.[1] The Khazraj, having obtained the Apostle's permission, sent a party under the leadership of ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAtīk to kill him. Muslims thought that by removing the leader it would be possible to avoid large scale bloodshed. After Sallām's assassination, al-Yusayr b. Zārim took over the leadership. He gathered the Jewish tribes and addressed them saying "My predecessors had adopted wrong tactics to oppose Muhammad; the best thing is to attack his stronghold and I intend to do so".[2]

The news of al-Yusayr's intentions created anxiety in Medina. So the Apostle sent ᶜAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah together with three other persons to investigate the truth. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah returned to Medina and confirmed the news. Since the Muslims did not want war and were depressed with the seemingly unfavourable terms of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah[3], ᶜAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah was sent again. But this time he was on an official mission and was accompanied by thirty other persons. On behalf of the Apostle, he proposed negotiations. The Muslims were ready to try for peace by offering al-Yusayr an honourable appointment as the chief of whole Khaybar. Since the distrust was mutual, al-Yusayr left for Medina with thirty of his own guards. The arrangement was that each Muslim would be

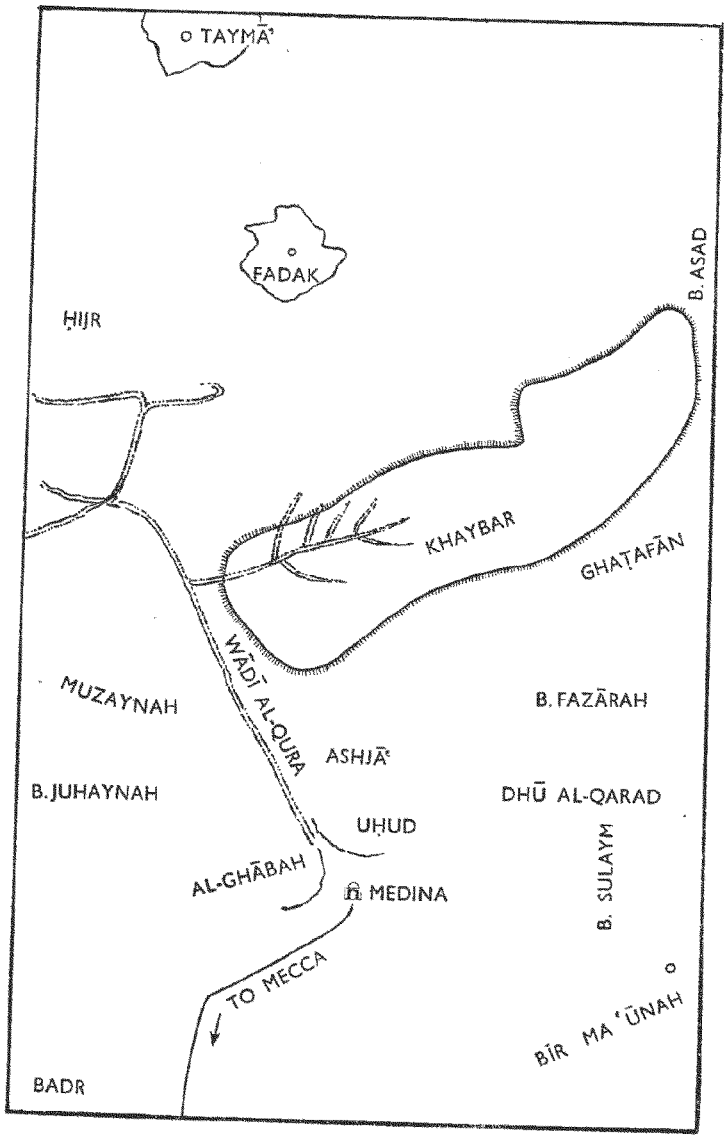
[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 714; Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 90.
[2] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 566.
[3] See Chapter VI for a discussion of the treaty.

accompanied by a Jew. However, in al-Qarqarah, which is about six miles from Khaybar, al-Yusayr changed his mind about going to the Apostle. In that atmosphere charged with suspicion al-Yusayr made a move to draw his sword, but ᶜAbd Allāh b. Unays was quick to perceive his intention, rushed at him and killed him.[1]

It was an unfortunate incident. Neither Ibn Saᶜd nor Ibn Isḥāq say that it was a ruse. In fact the Apostle's remarks to ᶜAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah on his return indicate that the Apostle did not anticipate the incident. He said, "It was Allāh who saved you from this company of oppressors."[2] If al-Yusayr, however, thought it was a ruse, he was not unjustified; ᶜAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah and ᶜAbd Allāh b. Unays were the *Anṣār* who had already killed two Jewish leaders, Kaᶜb b. al-Ashraf and Abū Rāfiᶜ Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, by deception. This unfortunate incident must have exacerbated the situation. The Jews were now in active negotiations with the Ghaṭafān to join them in attacking Medina. Khaybar became a rallying point of anti-Muslim forces. Both sides were getting ready for a final battle. The Jews at Khaybar, homogeneous, strong and safe in their forts, Muslims depressed by the peace at Ḥudaybiyah (6/628), uncertain of the waverers at Medina and surrounded by Arab tribes who were still uncertain of this new message and religion, both weighed their chances and waited.

The incident of Dhū Qarad, however, clinched the issue for the Muslims. They had no choice, but to deal immediately with the situation of Khaybar. Ibn Isḥāq[3], al-Wāqidī[4] and Ibn Saᶜd[5] have placed it before Ḥudaybiyah, whereas it took place immediately before the Apostle's expedition to Khaybar. Al-Ṭabarī[6], reported it from Salāmah b. ᶜAmr b. al-Akwaᶜ al-Aslamī who was himself involved in this attack and rightly places it after Ḥudaybiyah; so does al-Bukhārī,[7] who also reports from Salāmah b. al-Akwaᶜ, and dates it three days before the expedition to Khaybar. It so happened that ᶜUyaynah b. Ḥiṣn b. Ḥudhayfah b. Badr al-Fazārī with the cavalry of the Ghaṭafān raided the Apostle's milch camels in al-Ghābah. A man of the Banū

1 Ibn Hishām, p. 981. Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 92.
2 Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, pp. 92-3.
3 Ibn Hishām, pp. 719-20.
4 Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, pp. 537-549.
5 Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, pp 80-84.
6 Al-Ṭabarī, pp. 596-604.
7 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Bāb Ghazwat al-Qarad, Vol. V, p. 165.



Khaybar and the Position of the Hostile Tribes

Ghifār, who was incharge of the camels, was killed. His wife and the camels were carried away by al-Fazārī. Al-Ghābah is near Medina in the direction of Syria. That the Ghaṭafān should have ventured so near Medina was not only a provocative act but also a signal of danger for the Muslims. Further efforts to seek a peaceful settlement seemed to be futile. So the Apostle took immediate action to break the alliance between the Jews of Khaybar and the Ghaṭafān.

The Apostle marched (*Muḥarram* 7 *Hijrī*, May/June 628) from Medina to Khaybar by way of ʿIṣr, a mountain between Medina and Wādī al-Furʿ, where a mosque was built for him. From there he continued his march to al-Saḥbāʾ, which is an evening's journey from Khaybar. Then he went forward with the army and halted at al-Rajīʿ to prevent the Ghaṭafān who had marched out to join forces with Khaybar, "but after a day's journey, hearing a rumour about their property and families, they thought they had been attacked during their absence, so they went back on their tracks and left the way to Khaybar open to the Apostle."[1]

The Apostle reached Khaybar at night. Looking at Khaybar he prayed:

"We ask Thee for the good of this town and the good of its inhabitants and the good of what is in it, and we take refuge in Thee from its evil and the evil of its people and the evil that is in it".[2]

The Muslim army passed the night there. It seems the Apostle was still not sure whether the Jews really wished to give battle. However, when he saw the Jewish preparations any doubts on that count were removed. Taking into consideration the position of the Khaybar strongholds and the surrounding swamp, the date palms and valleys providing a natural protection, this must have been the most difficult military expedition for the Muslims. But unfortunately very few details of the battle are given by Ibn Isḥāq; those which are given are grist to a story-teller's mill rather than material for a historical examination. Ibn Isḥāq's account is replete with *isnāds*.[3] The account begins with a long chain of *isnāds* but all that the report

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 757. The whole account is given in detail by Ibn Hishām as well as Ibn Saʿd, pp. 106-117.
[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 757.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 755-778.

says is that Ibn al-Akwaᶜ was asked to dismount and chant one of his camel songs. ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜAmr b. Ḍamrah al-Fazārī told Ibn Isḥāq that the Apostle prohibited the flesh of domestic donkeys and Sallām b. Kirkirah added that when the Apostle forbade the flesh of donkeys he allowed them to eat horseflesh. Yazīd b. Abū Ḥabīb told Ibn Isḥāq from Abū Marzūq client of Tujīb from Ḥanash al-Ṣanᶜānī that he learnt it from a preacher that the Apostle said, "It is not lawful for a man who believes in Allāh and the last day to mingle his seed with another man's." All these reports and many more are very important from the point of view of Muslim law, and would not have the force of law if they were not given with proper *isnād*. As far as the account of the battle is concerned practically all reports are without any authority. It is the same pattern that we found in the account of the B. Qurayẓah. Had Ibn Isḥāq come across any authorities he would have quoted them, but there were none. In more than twenty-three pages of Wüstenfeld's edition there is little that can give us a reasonable account of how these forts on such heights and protected by people who had catapults were conquered by a small army who had no siege-machine.

According to Ibn Isḥāq[1] the first to fall was the castle of Nāᶜim, where Maḥmūd b. Maslamah was killed while resting, crushed by a millstone which was thrown on him by Kinānah b. al-Rabīᶜ b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq. The fort of al-Qamūs was difficult to conquer. Several commanders failed to subdue it. The casualties of both sides exceeded those of Badr (2/624), but not Uḥud where 72 Muslims and 22 Meccans were killed. At Khaybar, 19 Muslims were killed[2] and 50 were wounded. The enemy casualties at Badr were 70 killed and none wounded; at Khaybar 93 were killed.

Both sides knew that for the vanquished it was, probably, the last battle; a dominant elite, if defeated, would never get a chance to recover. A new group trying to establish its ascendancy, had been only very recently shown its weakness by the Quraysh of Mecca at Ḥudaybiyah.[3] The Jews at Medina and all the Arab tribes were waiting for the defeat of this new group which threatened the whole pattern of Arab life. This was one of the most important battles

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 758.

[2] Ibn Hishām and Ibn Saᶜd have given the names of companions killed (Ibn Hishām, p. 769; Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 107).

[3] See Chapter VI, pp 285-87.

of the Apostle's life. The Jews, though they could not unite under one command, fought bravely. Unlike the Jews of Medina, who had no will to fight and surrendered without giving battle, the Jews of Khaybar put up a stiff resistance. Every day the Muslims would storm and return unsuccessfully till finally ᶜAlī, flying the Apostle's standard—which was ᶜĀ°ishah's wrap[1]—won the day for the Muslims.

The Jews of Khaybar won back the honour, which had been lost by the B. Qaynuqāᶜ, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah by their trickery and cowardice. Marḥab came out of his castle carrying his weapons and saying :

Khaybar knows that I am Marḥab
An experienced warrior armed from hand to foot,
Now piercing, now slashing
As when lions advance in their rage.
The hardened warrior gives way before my onslaught;
my *ḥimā* cannot be approached.[2]

When after a heroic struggle with Muḥammad b. Maslamah, Marḥab was killed, his brother Yāsir came out with the challenge :

Khaybar knows that I am Yāsir
Fully armed, a doughty warrior
As when lions advance at a rush
The enemy give way before my onslaught.[3]

The Jews did not lose at Khaybar, but signed a negotiated peace with the Muslims, which suited the Apostle. The *maghāzī*-writers' account is improbable and, as Lammens has pointed out, incorrect.[4] As a result of the treaty Khaybar changed its alliance from the B. Fazārah to the Muslims. As Abū Hurayrah, who was in Khaybar with the Apostle[5], plaintively reports, "We conquered Khaybar, in the booty we took neither gold nor silver, but cattle,

[1] Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 106.
[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 760, Guillaume's translation. Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 110 gives a shorter version.
[3] Ibn Hishām, p. 761, Guillaume's translation. Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 113.
[4] See next chapter, pp. 115-117.
[5] Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. IV, pp. 325-341. Maḥmūd Abū Rayyah, *Aḍwā° ᶜala al-sunnah al-Muḥammadiyah* (Cairo, 1958), p. 153. See also G.H.A. Juynboll, *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden, 1969) for "the *ᶜadāla* of Abū Huraira", pp. 62-99.

camels, food and palm groves."[1] His report represents the correct position. Yaḥya b. Ādam reports from Nāfiᶜ that the Apostle gave Khaybar to its inhabitants against payment of half of the produce, and the palm trees.[2] Ibn Isḥāq's account of the division of the spoil concurs in principle with other reports,[3] but as Abū Hurayrah has pointed out there was no hidden treasure of gold or silver.[4]

When Khaybar had been "conquered", Ibn Isḥāq reports without *isnād*, al-Ḥajjāj b. ᶜIlāt al-Sulamī went to Mecca to collect his money, which was scattered among the Meccan merchants. He took the Apostle's specific "permission" to tell lies to collect the money. On his arrival in Mecca the people collected around him and asked how the Apostle fared in Khaybar. Al-Ḥajjāj told them, "He has suffered a defeat such as you have never heard of and his companions have been slaughtered; you have never heard the like, and Muhammad has been captured." The Meccans, pleased with the news, helped al-Ḥajjāj to collect his money. To a distraught ᶜAbbās, whom he took aside, Al-Ḥajjāj said,

'I left your brother's son married to the daughter of their king, Ṣafīyah, and Khaybar has been conquered and *all that is in it removed and become the property of Muhammad and his companions* . . . When three nights have passed let it be known if you so wish. On the third day ᶜAbbās put on his robe, scented himself, took his stick and went to the Kaᶜbah and performed the *ṭawāf*. When the people saw him they said, 'O Abū al-Faḍl, this is indeed steadfastness in a great misfortune!' ᶜAbbās answered, certainly not, by Allāh by whom you swear, Muhammad has conquered Khaybar and was married to the daughter of their king. He has seized all that they possess and it is now his property and property of his companions'.[5]

Neither of the two stories of al-Ḥajjāj, are true.

[1] Al-Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ* Book of Maghāzi, "Ghazwat Khaybar", Vol. V, p. 176.
[2] Yaḥya b. Ādam, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, pp .23-25.
[3] Ibn Hishām, pp. 774-776.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 763.
[5] Ibn Hishām, pp. 771-772, italics are mine.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT

> What does it profit the reader to wade through wars and battles and sieges of towns and enslavements of peoples, if he is not to penetrate to the knowledge of the causes which made one party succeed and other fail in the respective situations?
>
> — POLYBIUS

The Jews of the Ḥijāz on the eve of the *Hijrah*, as we discussed in the first chapter, were a declining elite, a group which was in the process of losing its dominance, though it was not necessarily aware of the loss.

Group status reversal is not a new phenomenon. History is full of cases where the dominant elite declined and became a subordinate minority. The reversal of such status can be either sudden and violent or peaceful and gradual. A shift in economic conditions and change in the skills required for dominance, such as the invention of gunpowder, the industrial revolution, replacement of the mastery of the seas by air power, can greatly contribute to the decline of a group, which for various reasons, has not been able to keep up with the times.

Towards the end of the fifth century the Jews ruled Ḥimyār, the last of the successive kingdoms of al-Yaman, dominated Yathrib and controlled Taymā', Fadak, Khaybar and Wādī al-Qura on the line of the caravan route running from north to south. With the reign of Dhū Nuwās (510-525) which "provides one of the most remarkable atrocity stories of history"[1], the Jewish dynasty of Saba ended after a run of a century and a half. This may be taken as the beginning of the decline of the Jewish dominant elite. About 522 Dhū Nuwās gave the Christians of Najrān the choice between apostasy

[1] H. St. J.B. Philby, *The Background of Islam* (Alexandria, 1947), p. 119.

and martyrdom. On refusal to accept Judaism they were mercilessly exterminated in the trenches.[1] The news was received with horror in Christendom. An Abyssinian army landed in Ḥimyār and *Arabia Felix* was once more restored to Christendom. At approximately the same time the Aws and the Khazraj were unified under the able leadership of Mālik b. ᶜAjlān and eventually achieved parity with the Jews if not dominance over them.[2] The Jewish settlements of the Ḥijāz, which according to Torrey were constituted "primarily as commercial enterprises",[3] had gradually changed into agricultural farms and palm groves, and their *āṭām*, originally built to stave off Bedouin *razzias*, lost their utility as strongholds against an opponent whose tactics were very different from those of the raiding Bedouin. When the Aws and the Khazraj came to Yathrib they could manage to build only thirteen strongholds, while the Jews had fifty-nine *āṭām*.[4] But on the eve of the *Hijrah*, the Aws and the Khazraj and other tribes had more than eighty strongholds.[5]

The war of Buᶜāth, which had ended five years before the *Hijrah*, had weakened both the Aws and the Khazraj. The dissipation caused by this war had a far reaching effect on the early history of Islam as it helped to encourage the Apostle's refuge in Yathrib. As ᶜĀ᾽ishah said :

> God caused the war of Buᶜāth to take place for the benefit of His Apostle. When the Apostle arrived in Yathrib their (*the Anṣār's*) important personalities had been dispersed and their leaders killed; they were in a bad state and God had caused the day of Buᶜāth so that they (*the Anṣār*) may enter Islam.[6]

This war had a far more damaging effect on the Jews of Yathrib. First, as the allies of the Aws and the Khazraj they too suffered in the same proportion as the two Arab factions. But far more important was the loss of their position as a group whose support was sought for by both the Aws and the Khazraj and who played a considerably important role in maintaining a balance of power.

[1] The Qur᾽ān, *Al-Burūj*, 5. Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment*, (London, 1926) pp. 36-39. Irfan Shahid, *Martyrs of Najrān*, is the latest book on the subject.
[2] Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, pp. 177-98 and pp. 190-215. See also *supra*, Chapter I.
[3] Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, p. 14.
[4] Al-Samhūdī, Vol. I, p. 165.
[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 190-215.
[6] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol. II, Book V, p. 55.

The loss of influence among the feuding clans of Yathrib was not the only loss. The Jews, who seemed to have dominated the economic life of Yathrib, were challenged by a new trading community, the *muhājirūn*— Quraysh of Mecca—who were active in trade and commerce. When Abū Hurayra was criticised for reporting a large number of Traditions he said :

> My brethren of the *anṣār* were occupied in tilling their lands; as for my brethren of the *muhājirūn*, they were occupied in the markets, whereas I stayed with the Apostle only for food. I was present when they were not and I committed to memory, whereas they forgot.[1]

The Jews could not forget that they were the original settlers of Yathrib and represented a superior civilization. Even though their political and economic position was threatened they could not accept the Apostle's invitation to cooperate on the basis of "a word equal between us and you that we worship no one but God."[2]

For the first time in their history they were confronted with a situation in which they were invited to join a wider community, not exactly as equals, but on liberal terms. The collective Jewish memory could think of their slavery in Egypt, their return to Palestine, the destruction of Jerusalem, Bar Kochba's insurrection, the Jewish kingdom of Ḥimyār, the persecution of the Christians of Najrān, or their own persecution by Heraclius, their heroic constancy in the face of permanent degradation and their forced conversion to Christianity.[3] They did not know how to react to this new situation. It is unfortunate that at this crucial period the Jews of Yathrib had no leadership of consequence. There was a failure of perception.

Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab and Kaʿb b. Asad represented the bankruptcy of their leadership. Not having fully realized that they were losing their position of influence the Jews could not adjust themselves to group status reversal, from dominant to non-dominant, which the arrival of the Apostle meant. This descent from power, unfortunately, left the Jews irreconcilable and eager to seek revenge and restoration of their paramountcy in Medina by alliance with the Quraysh of Mecca. "If Muhammad succeeded with his plan", Watt observes, "the Jews would have no chance of supreme power, they

[1] *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥābah, p. 1591, 160.
[2] The Qurʾān, *Āl-ʿImrān*, 64.
[3] Graetz, p. 103.

may have realized already that the Emigrants would generally have more influence on Muḥammad than the *Anṣār*....for some of them hopes may have been set on a league with Ibn Ubayy".[1] Even when they failed they did not realize the necessity of adaptability. "Thus the Jewish opponents of Mahomet placed a ridiculous meaning on his sayings and revelations, and treated him contemptuously."[2]

The Jews of Yathrib epitomised the tragedy of a group which had lost its moorings. The tensions in the Medina of A.D. 627 reflected the strains and stresses of the larger social structure of which they were only a minor part. Having been assimilated in the Arab majority they had preserved only the external forms of an identity. Nothing distinguished them from other Arabs except their monotheism and the dietary laws. The differences between the two should have been still reduced by the Islamic monotheism, but research has shown "that groups might become more conscious of their opposed identities precisely at a time when external differences between them are being reduced."[3] They failed to respond to the new situation by changing their attitude and social organization and fell back on the old tried methods of forging new alliances with non-Muslim Arabs, not anticipating that the winner would be the Muslim and not the Meccan Quraysh. Unfortunately for them, not only the fundamental changes in the larger society, but the character of the Jewish minority was determined by the personal qualities of two of its leaders, Kaʿb b. Asad and Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, one a wavering weakling and the other an incorrigible intriguer.

While a decline in the economic sphere is gradual and a declining elite gets time and opportunity to retard and even reverse the process of decline, a shift in the skills of war and a failure to comprehend the nature of that shift, and to adapt or retreat accordingly, is always fatal. The Jews of Yathrib lost and the Jews of Khaybar failed to destroy the small Muslim force investing it because they did not realize till the end that their *āṭām* had ceased to provide protection.

The origin of the word *āṭām* is doubtful. According to Arab scholars it is an Arabic word denoting height and according to Jewish scholars it is a Hebrew word. These were fortlike

[1] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 201-2.
[2] Graetz, p. 74. The Qurʾān, *Al-Nisā*, 46.
[3] Andre Beteille, "Race, Caste and Ethnic Identity," *International Social Science Journal*, No. 4, 1971, p. 534.

castles which were built on heights. Within the stronghold of the *āṭām* there were stores, silos, halls for conferences, schools, synagogues, treasury and armoury. There were springs of fresh water. They provided protection against the raiding Bedouin. The Arab raiders had neither the equipment, nor supplies nor patience for a prolonged siege. Arab warfare itself was more or less like a medieval European tournament. It started with reciprocal insults and panagyrics in self-praise. *Hijā'* (satire) was "an element of war just as important as the actual fighting."[1] The poet reviled his enemies, hurled curses on them and extolled the qualities of his tribe. Though the vendetta was prolonged and the vengeance transmitted from generation to generation, the individual battles themselves were not long and sustained. The wars of Fujār and Bu'āth for instance were long, but each episode during these wars was short. While a war may erupt at any time and a decisive battle can be fought at short notice, a siege demands an elaborate build-up. It is not easy to assess the strength of any well-fortified place. History abounds in expensive mistakes.

The most important and indeed the decisive factor in a siege is the endurance and determination of both the sides.

> These qualities need to be particularly highly developed in the besieged, who must believe most strongly in the justice of their cause, as well as having faith in the ultimate success of their stand; fear may well play a great part in hardening the defenders' will to resist ... A siege brings out the best and the worst in those enduring it.[2]

It is different from any ordinary warfare, where most of the combatants on both sides are soldiers. But in a siege which is not of a purely garrison nature, the majority of those besieged are non-combatant men, women, and children. As a consequence morale and discipline can easily be undermined. Children and old people suffer the same privations as the soldiers, and are directly affected. In case of defeat they share the same fate. Disease and hunger can easily undermine even the strongest fortress.

In all the four major encounters with the Apostle the Jews of the Ḥijāz chose the shelter and protection of their *āṭām*. In a

[1] Ignaz Goldziher, "Über die Vorgeschichte der Higa'-Poesie" in *Abhand. zur arab. Philologie*, Part I (Leyden, 1896), p. 26.

[2] Eversley Belfield, *Defy and Endure*, (New York, 1967), p. 1-5.

siege the heaviest burden falls upon the leader of the defenders. He

> has to combine in himself a veritable galaxy of talents. He must be brave and appear to be brave without being foolhardy; he must have, or soon acquire, sufficient personal authority to be the unquestioned leader of his troops;... such a man must remain serene in the face of setbacks and disappointments, so that he generates an air of confidence in eventual victory ....[1]

These qualities, as the three sieges of Yathrib amply show, were completely absent in the Jewish leadership. Khaybar presented a different picture, but there, too, a unified leadership was not possible.

Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa'd in their accounts of the conflict with the B. Qaynuqā' have not given the name of any person who led these unfortunate Jews. They were not short of prominent people whose names have been mentioned in other contexts. Ibn Isḥāq has given the names of twenty-eight prominent adversaries of the Apostle from the B. Qaynuqā'.[2] Rafā'ah b. Qays was one of them; he went to the Apostle asking why he turned his back to Jerusalem as the *qiblah*.[3] He also went to the *Anṣār* asking them not to contribute to the public expenses and when he spoke to the Apostle he twisted his words.[4] Finḥāṣ is another rabbi of the B. Qaynuqā' who infuriated Abu Bakr by saying that the Jews were not poor compared to Allāh.[5] Another, Shās b. Qays, had earlier ordered a Jewish youth to recite the poems of Bu'āth to the *Anṣār*.[6] But neither on the eve of the siege nor during the siege nor after the siege is the name of any leader of the B. Qaynuqā' mentioned. There were seven hundred well-fed and well-provided combatants among the B.Qaynuqā'; three hundred of them had their armour. Any leader with even a modicum of military experience would have given battle to the Apostle in the open field. With their fortress at their back the B. Qaynuqā' could effectively deal with the three hundred-odd Muslims with ease. Unlike the Quraysh at Badr they were not short of water, and were not camped in the open. They were strategically in a stronger position. Their market was near the bridge of the Wādī of Baṭḥān and an *uṭum*

[1] Belfield, p. 5-6.
[2] Ibn Hishām, p. 352.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 381.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 390.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 388.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 385.

on the eastern side of the bridges. With their quarter[1] straddling the bridge they could inflict the maximum losses on the Muslims in an open combat, retreat to their fortress and open the charge again at a time of their choosing. The Muslims were out of the town and, though they were assured of their supply route, they could not insure a continuous supply for a long-drawn-out battle. The B. Qaynuqāᶜ instead shut themselves up in their *uṭum*. They seemed to have made no attempt to either fight or break the siege. The Apostle just went and sat down outside with his men. There was no action. He could patiently sit and wait; The B. Qaynuqāᶜ could not endure beyond fifteen days.[2] Our sources tell us that they were the bravest of the Jews[3] and were "men of war".[4] These were the people who protected ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ubayy from all his enemies.[5] The days of B. Qaynuqāᶜ bravery had passed, and the decline seems to have been rapid.

The B. al-Naḍīr had many *āṭām* and were well provided. According to al-Wāqidī they had food supplies to last a year and their water resources were abundant; they had even provided themselves with stones to drop on the attacking force. Even granting al-Wāqidī's tendency to exaggerate and lace his narrative with imaginative details, the B. al-Naḍīr were far more prepared for a long siege than the B.Qaynuqāᶜ. The Muslims, on the other hand, after their discomfiture at Uḥud and the massacre at Biᵓr Maᶜūnah, were in no position to maintain a long siege. The Apostle seemed to be conscious of their strength and his weakness, and therefore to break the spirit of the defenders he ordered, contrary to Arab custom, that the palm trees should be cut down and burnt. The palm trees were in any case lost—it made no difference to the B. al-Naḍīr whether they were burnt or taken over by the Muslims. If the B. al-Naḍīr won they could plant new palms; if they were defeated they would be expelled and could not make any use of these palms. But Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab was not a military leader. He was an intriguer. He could not foresee that a long siege would be to their advantage, it would not only disrupt the daily life of Yathrib but would also provide an opportunity to ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl

[1] Saleh Ahmad Al-Ali, "Studies in the Topography of Medina (During the 1st century A.H.)", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, April 1961, p. 712.
[2] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. I, p. 177; Ibn Saᶜd, Vol. II, p. 29.
[3] Ibn Saᶜd, II, p. 29.
[4] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. I, p. 176.
[5] Ibn Hishām, p. 546.

and other disaffected people whom the Qur'ān described as *munāfiqūn* to foment trouble and join the battle at an appropriate time. They had sent to them a message saying, "stand firm and protect yourselves ... if you are attacked we will fight with you".[1] But there was no occasion to attack; all that the Apostle did was to burn a few palms and sit with his companions. The Jews lost nerve and surrendered without fighting. The Qur'ān has explicitly referred to the lack of military action: "You urged neither horse nor camel for it; but Allāh grants power to His Messenger over whomsoever He pleases".[2]

While the B. Qaynuqā' and the B. al-Naḍīr merely shut themselves inside their *āṭām* the B. Qurayẓah according to al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa'd offered resistance; arrow shots were exchanged and stones were hurled,[3] and there were some casualties on both sides. According to al-Wāqidī and Ibn Sa'd the siege lasted only fifteen days, but Ibn Isḥāq says it continued for twenty-five days. The B. Qurayẓah were taken by surprise. It was blitzkrieg—the lightning war. For almost a month the Muslims themselves had withstood a siege. The B. Qurayẓah did not expect that they would directly return from the front and invest them. This time the Muslim army outnumbered the Jews; there were three thousand Muslims as against six hundred to nine hundred Jews. But it was winter and the Muslims were in the open; the Jews were in their strongholds well protected and provided. Above all they were fresh and the Muslims were hungry and tired. Had the Jews decided to give battle in the open they had the advantage of being on the home ground. They could retreat and sally forth in a war of attrition, which was not to the Muslim advantage. The Quraysh, the Ghaṭafān, the Jews of Khaybar, in fact none of the Arab tribes had been so far subdued by the Muslims and would, probably, have taken advantage at the slightest sign of Muslim weakening. Though Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab was with the B. Qurayẓah, other leaders of B. al-Naḍīr were free to organize help and rally support. In fact the *munāfiqūn* of Medina seemed to be still hoping that the Confederates would return to attack Medina. There is a pointed reference to this hope in the Qur'ān.

> They think the Confederates have not departed; and if the Confederates should come again, they would wish to be with the (nomad) Arabs in the desert asking for news of you.[4]

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 653; al-Wāqidī, Vol. I, p. 368; Ibn Sa'd, Vol. II, p. 57.
[2] The Qur'ān, *Al-Ḥashr*, 6.
[3] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 501; Ibn Sa'd, Vol. II, p. 74.
[4] The Qur'ān, *Al-Aḥzāb*, 20.

But the Jewish leadership was as demoralised as ever. The feebleness shown by the B. Qurayẓah made it apparent that they had no leader. Kaᶜb b. Asad acted like a man driven by despair. While adversity can bring out almost superhuman heroic qualities among besieged people, the B. Qurayẓah were plunged into the depths of depression. They had lost the qualities of leadership, courage and endurance, most probably, during the war of Buᶜāth or even earlier.

The division of the Apostle's life in two periods, the Meccan and the Medinan, seems to be neat and logical. But it is an over-simplification. After the *Hijrah* the Apostle and the Emigrants had escaped persecution, but the struggle for survival had not ceased. A more logical periodization would be to divide the Apostle's life into three phases: the first up to the year of his call to the Ministry, the second from this date to the truces of Ḥudaibiyah and Khaybar, and the third from Khaybar to his death. We might subdivide the second phase in two periods, one of persecution and the second of armed struggle, or call them the periods of (1) Meccan struggle, (2) Medinan struggle and (3) the propagation of the faith. Ḥudaybiyah and Khaybar, whatever be the periodization, are definite watersheds in the history of early Islam. The largest number of people the Apostle could gather around him on a battle-field was 3,000 up to the end of the sixth year of the *Hijrah*. According to our sources this was the number of people who took part in defending Medina during the Battle of the *Aḥzāb*.[1] But the people who went out on an expedition did not exceed 1,600.[2] This gives a fairly correct idea of the Muslim strength during the first six years of the *Hijrah*. Except for the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* the Arab tribes had not accepted Islam. "Islam had touched only a few tribes on the neighbourhood of Mecca and Medina".[3] The continuous conflict with the Quraysh of Mecca and the cold war with the Jewish elite of the Ḥijāz was not conducive to the propagation of the faith, which required stability and peace. The Apostle was nearing sixty and had accomplished little except a few local successes. The failure of the Meccan-Jewish attempt to liquidate the Apostle and his followers at the Battle of the *Aḥzāb* was only a negative success for the Muslims. They remained bottled up in Medina, safe within their own confines, free to send expeditions,

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 673.
[2] Ibn saᶜd, II, p. 95. Ibn Hishām gives two figures, 700 and 1400, p. 740.
[3] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 40.

but unable to expand. Mecca and Khaybar with their tribal alliances and alignments stood firm in their opposition to Islam. They had failed to destroy Islam; the Apostle was also probably conscious of his inability to win them over. The two actions which he took soon after the Battle of the *Aḥzāb* seem to indicate a change in his strategy. He would try to neutralize them and now, being an established power in Medina, would seek a *modus vivendi* with Mecca and Khaybar.

In 628 (6 A.H.) while the exhausted Byzantine and Sassanian empires were negotiating peace after twenty-six years of war the Apostle also took a step towards peace; he announced that he was going to Mecca for the *ʿUmrah* (the lesser pilgrimage). The pilgrimage by its very nature was to be peaceful. He invited other Muslims to accompany him. They took animals for sacrifice and were armed only with the traveller's weapon—the sheathed sword. Sixteen hundred Muslims, including four women, went with him. Some ten miles northwest of Mecca the Apostle camped and the Quraysh took a position between the Muslims and the city to prevent their entry. The Apostle was not allowed to perform the *ʿUmrah*, but got a nonaggression pact instead. The terms of the pact were as follows:

1. The Muslims and the Quraysh will lay aside war for ten years during which men can be safe and refrain from hostilities;
2. If one of the Quraysh should go over to the Muslims without the permission of his guardian, they would hand him over to Meccans, but if any Muslim goes to the Meccans, the latter would not return him to Muhammad;
3. The parties to the pact will not show enmity to each other and there shall be no secret reservations or bad faith;
4. Those who wish to enter into alliance with the Muslims or with the Quraysh will be at liberty to do so;
5. The Muslims shall retire this year without performing the *ʿUmrah;*
6. Next year Muslims may come with swords in sheaths, but nothing more; and can stay in Mecca for three nights.[1]

These terms were humiliating. "ʿUmar jumped up and went to Abū Bakr saying, 'Is he not God's Apostle, and are we not Muslims, and are they not polytheists?' to which Abū Bakr agreed, and he

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 747-8.

(ʿUmar) went on 'Then why should we agree to what is demeaning to our religion?'....Then he went to the Apostle and put the same questions... "[1] The Apostle had bought peace, which he needed most, at the cost of a great many concessions.

Having negotiated the nonaggression pact with the Quraysh of Mecca the Apostle seemed to be anxious to reach some settlement with the second most important power in the Ḥijāz, the Jews of Khaybar. It was one of the most hazardous of expeditions undertaken so far. The Apostle led a force of 1,600 men against approximately 10,000 Jews within their fortifications and 4,000 men of Ghaṭafān waiting outside in the open. It did not seem to be a normal expeditionary force. The odds were heavily against the Muslims. Most of the Arabian tribes were still pagan and had witnessed the retreat of the Muslims from Ḥudaybiyah. Our primary sources are silent on the subject; for them history and hagiography are so fused with each other that it is difficult to reconstruct the events from their narrative. Having suffered a setback at the hands of the Quraysh why did the Apostle undertake an expedition which seemed to have little chance of success? After the unfortunate incident at al-Qarqarah where al-Yusayr b. Zārim was killed, the Apostle appears to have decided to go himself to negotiate peace with the Jews of Khaybar. He took a large party of dependable and devoted people. These were the people who had taken "their pledge unto death" under a tree at Ḥudaybiyah, known as the pledge of al-Riḍwān.[2] This seems to be a reasonably precautionary action. He did not wish war. He made it clear that those who wished to go for booty need not accompany him on this expedition.[3] He was going into the heart of enemy's stronghold to negotiate peace and sign a treaty with the enemy which would guarantee peace. If he succeeded, it appears, he would bring a nonaggression pact; if not, it might turn out to be a rout like the battle of Uḥud.[4] There was no booty in either case and he did not want to take with him on this occasion anyone who would tend to lower the morale of this small force.

[1] Ibn Hishām, pp. 747.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 746.

[3] Al-Wāqidī, Vol. II, p. 634; Ibn Saʿd, Vol. II, p. 106.

[4] The battle of Uḥud was fought in March 625 (X/3). The Apostle went out of Medina to fight against the advice of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy who said, "We have never gone out to fight an enemy but we have met disaster and none has come in against us without being defeated". (Ibn Hishām, p. 558). Muslim losses were 70 killed and 40 wounded as against three Meccans killed.

He had earlier taken a peace initiative and had sent a letter to Khaybar. The Apostle wrote to the Jews of Khaybar :

In the name of Allāh the Compassionate the Merciful from Muhammad the Apostle of Allāh, *friend and brother of Moses who confirms what Moses brought.* Allāh says to you, O people of the Book, and you will find it in your Book, "Muhammad is the Apostle of Allāh, and those with him are hard against the disbelievers, compassionate among themselves. Thou seest them bowing and prostrating themselves seeking grace and acceptance from Allāh. The mark of their prostrations is on their foreheads. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is like a seed which sends forth its shoot and strengthens it, and it becomes thick and rises straight upon its stalk, delighting the sowers, that He may cause the disbelievers to burn with rage at (the sight of) them. Allāh has promised those who believe and do good works forgiveness and a great reward".[1] I adjure by Allāh, and by what He has sent down to you, by the *manna* and quails He gave as food to your tribes before you, and by His drying the sea for your fathers when He delivered them from Pharaoh and his works, that you tell me, do you find in what He has sent down to you that you believe in Muhammad? *If you do not find that in your Book then "there is no compulsion upon you.* The right path has become plainly distinguished from error"[2] so I call you to Allāh and His Apostle.[3]

The letter contains nothing which has not been said before. Both in tone and form it represents the Apostle's approach of identifying his message with that of Moses. Mention of his brotherly relations with Moses was made when he was carried by night to al-Aqṣa Mosque for his ascent to heaven.[4] The letter is an invitation to Islam qualified with the formula that there is no compulsion in matters of religion. In the letter there is nothing to attract any doubt about its authenticity, no internal contradiction and no anachronism. The fabrication of such a letter to justify an attack on Khaybar is out of the question; firstly, it contains nothing which even remotely alludes to any provocation from the Jews of Khaybar, and, secondly, Ibn Isḥāq is not in the habit of providing justification for attacking the Jews. We have earlier noticed that Ibn Isḥāq did not give any reason to explain the Apostle's warning to the B. Qaynuqāʿ.[5] Likewise the case of the Jewish merchant Ibn Sunaynah who was killed by Muḥayyiṣah without any provocation.[6] Furthermore the letter is

[1] The Qurʾân, *Al-Fatḥ*, 29.
[2] *Ibid.*, *Al-Baqarah*, 256.
[3] Ibn Hishām, pp 376-7. Italics are mine.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 270.
[5] *Supra*, Chapter III.
[6] Ibn Hishām, pp. 553-54.

not given with the account of Khaybar, but in the chapter dealing with references to the *Munāfiqūn* and the Jews in the second *sūrah* of the Qur'ān *Al-Baqarah*. No later falsifier could have adopted a style which in its attempt to conciliate sounds like an appeal. Ibn Isḥāq has not given the date of this letter. But it can be easily discovered. The letter quotes the last verse of the *sūrat al-Fatḥ*. There is consensus among Muslim scholars that the *surah* was revealed when, after signing the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, the Apostle was on his way back to Medina (March 628/*Dhū al-Qa'dah* 6 A.H.)[1]. In the same year in the month of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah* he sent letters to kings. Since the Battle of Khaybar took place early in the seventh year of the *Hijrah* (May-June/628) the letter must have been sent along with these letters. This letter had no response from the Jews of Khaybar or, if it had, Muslim historians have not recorded it.

The chain of events, the nonaggression pact at Ḥudaybiyah, the letter to the Jews of Khaybar, the invitation to Zārim to come to Medina, leads us to conclude that the Apostle needed peace at any cost. Looking at the terms of Ḥudaybiyah one might even think that peace with honour had almost changed into peace at any cost. The conciliatory tone of the letter to Khaybar is indeed remarkable when one takes into consideration the bitter opposition the Apostle had received from the Jews of Medina. He called himself "friend and brother of Moses" and claimed to "confirm what Moses brought", he adjured them "by God, and by what He has sent down to you, by the *manna* and quails He gave as food to your tribes before you". Having entreated them to accept him as the Apostle of God he added "If you do not find that in your scripture then there is no compulsion upon you".

The aging Apostle needed peace and was appealing for it. The Khaybar Jews however, had by now lost control of their affairs. Their leadership had passed into the hands of the exiled Naḍīrite leaders.[2] They had failed their own tribe earlier and were now playing with the destiny of those who had everything to gain by reaching a compromise with the rising power of Islam. The

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 749. Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, Vol. VI, p. 169. Zamakhsharī, Vol. III, pp. 540-541. Al-Bayḍāwī, Vol. II, p. 266.

[2] Among the chiefs of B. al-Naḍīr "who went to Khaybar were Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, Kinānah b. al-Rabī' b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq, and Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab. When they got there the inhabitants became subject to them". Ibn Hishām, p. 653.

Apostle later repeated the Qurʾānic injunction of "no compulsion", making it clear that the invitation to Islam was not compulsory. The new *ummah* needed reassurance. A hostile people only 90 miles from Medina posed a great danger to the new community.

The Apostle, on the other hand, as a good general, could foresee the dangers of a siege. Located on a high mountainous plateau and surrounded by heavily cultivated valleys and malarial swamps the Khaybar fortifications covered a wide area. This was one location which defied siege. Discussing the nature of sieges Belfield observes:

> For those attacking, the first essential is to seal off the besieged place from the outside world. This is always a laborious and often lengthy undertaking, and thus no government will embark upon a major siege without considerable thought, nor will it do so unless there seems to be encouraging prospects of a relatively rapid success... To assess the strength of the natural and the prepared defensive features of any well-fortified place is a very complex matter. Here history abounds in expensive mistakes... In general, natural fortresses, such as Malta and Gibraltar, nearly always seem to defeat the attacker, or cause terrible losses before being taken.[1]

The Apostle took the field as a last resort. It did not seem to be a conclusive battle, though Muslim historians have tried to depict it as such. Ultimately a peace was negotiated, but it was after a great loss of life in battle. Half of the dates which were offered to the Ghaṭafān were now annually given to the Muslims as tribute. "This practice, far from being considered at that time a sign of political weakness, was freely indulged in also by the great Byzantine and Persian empires to secure peace from many unruly neighbouring tribes. It was far less expensive than keeping permanent garrisons to stave off raids. By arranging with Mohammad to pay him half of their annual produce, the Khaybar Jews may have thought that they had merely exchanged one recipient for another."[2] They exchanged the alliance of the Ghaṭafān with that of the Apostle. The only loser were the Fazārah. As Lammens has pointed out it is not correct to talk of it in terms of Muslim conquest of Khaybar. Later historians have painted it as a victory to justify acts which took place during ʿUmar's time.[3]

The Jews of Khaybar had not adopted a condescending attitude towards the Muslims, but they had certainly over-estimated their

[1] Belfield, pp. 4-5.
[2] Baron, Vol. III, p. 79.
[3] Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale avant l'Hegire*, p. 72.

combat efficiency. The fortifications were lightly held. There seemed to be neither coordination nor proper liaison between the different garrisons of the Jews. The Apostle on the other hand took the Khaybarites by surprise, which was the master key to his success in all major battles; it was surprise both in tactics and techniques combined with a toughness to which both the Jews of the Ḥijāz and the Quraysh were unaccustomed.

The Jews, though they did not lose, nonetheless were compelled to negotiate because they had not taken a serious view of their adversary.

The frequent references to the Jews in the Qurʾān, as interpreted by the classical interpreters of the Qurʾān, the unfolding of the Muslim practice, the development of the *Sharīʿah* and the garbled accounts of the controversy with the Jews of Yathrib have created a picture of religious controversy which is both distorted and distorting. Almost all the modern historians have taken the view that when the Apostle left Mecca he looked forward to his acceptance by the Jews of Yathrib. On arrival he tried to win them over by adopting the fast of ʿĀshūrāʾ, by turning towards Jerusalem for prayers etc. The Apostle was, however, soon disappointed by the Jewish rejection, so he broke with them and crushed them.

This picture represents a contorted reflection of events. There is no evidence for Gabrieli's assumption that the Apostle at one time had considered the Jews of Medina as "converts to Islam".[1] Two early Meccan *sūrahs*, the *Banī Isrāʾīl* and the *Yūnus*, show that the Apostle from the very beginning had an idea of the Jewish reaction to his claim. The seventeenth chapter of the Qurʾān, the *Banī Isrāʾīl*, has the following eight verses warning the Jews of their future :

> 4. And we revealed to the children of Israel in the Book, (saying), you will surely do mischief in the land twice, and you will surely become excessively overbearing.
> 5. So when the time for the first of the two warnings came, we sent against you (some) servants of Ours possessed of great might in war, and they penetrated (the innermost parts of your) houses and it was a warning that was bound to be carried out.
> 6. Then We gave you back the power against them, and aided you with wealth and children, and made you larger in numbers.
> 7. Now if you do well, you will do well for your own souls; and if you do evil, it will (only)be against them. So when the time for the latter warning came, (We raised a people against you) to cover your faces

[1] Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam*, p. 67.

with grief, and to enter the mosque (The Temple) as they entered it the first time, and to destroy all they conquered with their destruction.
8. It may be that your Lord will now have mercy on you; but if you return (to your previous state), We too will return, and We have made hell a prison for the disbelievers.
9. Surely, this Qur'ān guides to what is most right; and gives to the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a great reward.
10. And that for those who do not believe in what is to come later we have prepared a grievous punishment.
11. And man asks for evil as he should ask for good; and man is hasty.

In these verses of the *Banī Isrā'īl* the use of the personal pronoun in the second person is highly significant. Lammens after an examination of early sources has rightly pointed out that there were no Jews in Mecca[1], and there is general consensus that the verses are definitely Meccan.[2] These verses do not point towards an Apostle looking forward to be accepted by the Jews. They also do not indicate an active controversy between the Apostle and the Jews. It is a general statement without polemics. A later verse on the subject is clear.

And we prepared for the children of Israel a blessed abode, and We provided them with all manner of good things. They differed not in anything till true knowledge came to them. Surely thy Lord will judge between them on the day of Judgment concerning that in which they differed. (*Yūnus*, 93).

Muir, Nöldeke and Grimme[3] are in agreement with Zamakhsharī[4], and al-Bayḍāwi[5] that it is a Meccan *sūrah*. Wherry calls it "undoubtedly of Meccan origin"[6] and goes on to say that "the knowledge intended here is that of the Qur'ān, and the allusion is to the rejection of Muḥammad by the Jews".[7]

[1] *Supra*, Chapter I.
[2] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Vol. II, p. 103 (Ibn Mas'ūd's report that *Banī Isrā'īl*, *Al-Kahf* and *Maryam* belong to early Meccan period). Zamakhsharī, Vol. II, p. 436. Bayḍāwī, Vol. II, p. 532. Ibn Kathīr, Vol. VI, p. 49. Wherry, Vol. III, pp. 52-53. Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh, 1970) p. 207.
[3] See Bell, p. 207.
[4] Zamakhsharī, Vol. II, p. 225.
[5] Al-Bayḍāwi, Vol. I, p. 407.
[6] Wherry, p. 321.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

The Apostle knew before his arrival in Medina that he would be rejected by the Jews and yet offered them the terms of the *Ṣaḥīfah* on the basis of the Unity of God. But the Jews considered him not even a false Messiah, but an outright usurper; being a gentile (*ummī*) he could not be a prophet unto them, and as a prophet to the Arabs he could endanger their already declining position of influence. Two of their major allies in Medina had already accepted this refugee prophet; the Meccans were unable to crush him alone, and their own efforts in Medina to dislodge him had rebounded. The decline was rapid and they were unable to do anything to stop it.

The actual encounter with Judaism took place at a later period, and not during the time of the Apostle.[1] The *sīrah* writers, *maghāzī* narrators, Qurʾānic commentators and the *Ḥadīth* collectors read the Old Testament and the Jewish literature and applied all suitable signs to the Apostle.[2] The Messianic movements among the Jews helped to confuse the situation. The abiding hope of the Jews in *galut* centred around a king in the house of David who would rule over a new golden age. Derived from the Hebrew *mashiah* (anointed), the term Messiah in Jewish history applied to the long-awaited, Divinely chosen king who "shall be called wonderful... The Prince of Peace", who would destroy the enemies of Israel and establish a paradise-like reign of peace and prosperity. Though appearing in many shapes and permutations, the messianic hope has been an activist element in Jewish history. It has retained the binding spell of Jewish kingship to be realized through God's will.[3] It was not only an article of faith but an emotional necessity in times of distress to hope constantly for the advent of the Messiah. One element basic to Jewish messianism is anticipation of the "birth

[1] See M.J. Kister, *"Ḥaddithu ʿan banī isrāʾīla wa-la ḥaraja"*, *Israel Oriental Studies II*, 1972, pp 215-239. The article not only discusses this tradition, but also provides a comprehensive list of references on the subject of early Muslim-Jewish encounter; Israel Friedlaender, "Jewish-Arabic Studies", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. I, 1910-11, pp. 183-215, 481-516; De Lacy O'Leary, "The Jewish Transmitters", *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History* (London, 1954).

[2] "This influence of the Jewish Agada and Christian legend is attested with regret by orthodox theologians from the earliest times of Islam up to later periods", Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, Vol. II, p. 131.

[3] The idea of Jewish kingship seems to have changed to the idea of a Jewish state since the eighteenth century.

pangs of the Messiah (*hevlei Mashi'ah*)—the time of troubles and turbulence that precedes his coming. Hence, periods in which massacres of Jews occurred have also been periods of fervent messianic expectations and movements.

The Jews have never ceased their vigil for "*one* like the son of man", who will be given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him". Many of the Jewish patriots who fought in the Great Revolt against Rome (66-70 A.D.) believed that they were participating in a battle which was to be followed by the Messiah. Their unflinching heroism can be understood in the context of a messianic movement. The Jewish revolt against Emperor Trajan in 115-17 and the Bar Kochba uprising in 132-35 were influenced by messianic speculations. In the fifth century a Jew in Crete said he was Moses and promised the Jews of the island that he would take them to Judea without ships. He fixed a date for the miracle and the Jews gathered at the appointed time. They were ordered to jump into the sea and many of these credulous Jews were drowned.

During the sixth century the continuous conflict between the Byzantine and Sassanid empires gave rise to messianic expectations, which most probably played a major role in shaping the image of Arab Jewry. Zerubbabel, a grandson of King Jehoiachin, was the leader of the Jewish exiles who returned from Babylonia to Judea with the consent of Cyrus. Under Darius I in 521 B. C. he was appointed governor of Judea and thus became the last ruler of Judea from the House of David. The pseudepigraphical work, the Book of Zerubbabel written in his time tells about the visions of Zerubbabel concerning the appearance of the Messiah. The literature which developed around the messianic hopes arising from the Book of Zerubbabel, is vast. Though "it is difficult to date the various works in this literature; some of them may even be earlier than the Book of Zerubbabel... (yet it) had an enormous impact upon medieval Jewry".[1]

Until the beginning of the sixth century at least two successive Judaised dynasties ruled in the Yemen. There was a large Jewish population in Arabia and it is very likely that the messianic hopes might have sustained the Jewish people of Arabia during the destruc-

[1] 'Messianic Movements', *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), Vol. XI, Column 1413.

tion of the kingdom of Ḥimyār and the decline in the position which followed it. The various references by Ibn Isḥāq to the Jewish prophecies regarding the advent of a "prophet" seemed to be the result of a variant reading. Ibn Isḥāq and Muslim scholars following him thought that the Jews whose rabbis had predicted the advent of a prophet were really waiting for Muhammad and when he claimed the prophethood, the Jews deliberately denied him. It seems the Jews of the Ḥijāz saw no signs, and did not witness any prophecies being fulfilled. Salām b. Mishkam of the B. al-Naḍīr told Muʿādh b. Jabal "He (the Apostle) has not brought us anything we recognize and he is not the one we spoke of to you".[1]

The language and the idiom of the argument between the Apostle and the Jews was unmistakably religious. But "ideological differences, no matter, how mutually antagonistic they become, alone are not enough to sustain negative patterns of conduct. However when some breakdown, crisis, or structural stress, e.g., economic, social, or political disintegration occurs, such differences become vital".[2] Religious conflict becomes lethal only when social, political and economic conflicts are conjoined with it. The Aws and the Khazraj, who were trying to take over the control of the oases from the Jews, did not seem to have any experience in trade and commerce. By inviting Muhammad and some seventy of his Quraysh companions the *Anṣār* gave refuge to the Apostle of God, and got, among many things, a leader with commercial expertise in the bargain. The Apostle, earlier in his career, had established a reputation for managing the commercial interests of the richer Quraysh merchants. The *maghāzī* writers do not tell us how the *Muhājirūn* made a living in Medina during the early period of their sojourn. There is no evidence to show that they changed their vocation and took up agriculture, but there are occasional notices of their commercial transactions. As Abū Hurayrah, reported, the *Muhājirūn* spent their time in the markets.[3] ʿUmar did not hear the message conveyed by the Apostle as he was engaged in the market.[4] When ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAwf was offered half of his wealth by his Medinan 'brother' Saʿd b. al-Rabīʿ,

[1] Ibn Hishām, p. 379.
[2] Ellis Rivkin, *The Shaping of Jewish History: A Radical Interpretation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 24.
[3] *Supra*, p. 105.
[4] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Buyūʿ, Vol. III, p. 72.

he said, "May God bless your wealth and family; you just show me the market". ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was shown the way to the B. Qaynuqāʿ market, where he soon earned a skin of butter and cheese.[1] It is not surprising that the B. Qaynuqāʿ were the first to feel threatened by this new mercantile element, and played into the hands of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy to save their business. The Jewish trading post[2] of Tāʾif was saved because the people of Tāʾif as a whole rejected the Apostle.[3] A section of the Medinan Arabs, on the other hand, brought the Apostle to Medina. Not accustomed to competition the B. Qaynuqāʿ could not think of buying off the superior business acumen of the *Muhājirūn;* they tried to remove them instead. The B. al-Naḍīr, the B. Qurayẓah and other Jewish clans were mainly engaged in farming and agriculture. The danger posed to them by the new entrepreneur class of the *Muhājirūn* was of a different nature. The B. Qaynuqāʿ through their market provided Yathrib and its environs opportunities to change goods and barter produce, and acted as middlemen and retailers and were an adjunct to the agrarian economy of the oasis. But the *Muhājirūn* did not grow up "in the atmosphere of the desert, but in that of high finance".[4] The Meccans were "financiers skilful in the manipulation of credit, shrewd in their speculations, and interested in any potentialities of lucrative investment from Aden to Gaza or Damascus".[5] The Jewish farmer and land-owner was threatened by the merchant. Not only his social values, but his prosperity, as usual with all agrarian societies, faced danger from the new merchant class. The B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah fought and lost; other Jewish clans accepted their temporary decline with resignation and re-emerged as an elite, but not dominant, after mastering the technique, which the *Muhājir* entrepreneur had brought to Yathrib.

It was a local affair. It was not an encounter between the two religions. That encounter began in Mecca, *where there were no Jews* and reached its highest point under the Abbasids in the Eastern Caliphate and under the Umayyads in Spain during the periods *when there was no persecution.* The rise of Islam and the Jewish

[1] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Buyūʿ, Vol. III, pp. 68-69.
[2] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, ed. by M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), p. 56.
[3] Ibn Hishām, pp. 279-81.
[4] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 3.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

renaissance are concomitant. The great Jewish-Muslim symbiosis[1] during the golden period of Islam was the result of that encounter. It is meaningless to talk of a 'break with the Jews'. It presupposes an alliance with them of which we have no evidence. The Jews of the Ḥijāz as usual with a declining elite soon faded out of the limelight, but did not disappear from Medina. When the Apostle died his coat of mail was mortgaged to a Jew who had supplied him with foodgrains.[2] The Jews were obviously conducting business as usual, but for the Muslim chronicler of wars and the biographer of the Apostle the Jews of the Ḥijāz ceased to be of interest after the peace of Khaybar. The jurists and the Tradition compilers kept their watch on the Jews for a slightly longer period to find or establish precedents for collecting *jizyah* and *kharāj*. Actually the Jews of the Ḥijāz were neither expelled nor did they leave the region during the lifetime of the Apostle.

The Apostle himself took care to obliterate signs of bitterness. To both the B. Qurayẓah and the Jews of Khaybar the Apostle made a gesture of goodwill and conciliation after their discomfiture. No such gesture was made to the B. Qaynuqāᶜ. They did not need it either. The pattern of the Apostle's marriages as it unfolds itself is clearly social and political. "His marriages were not simply love matches; they were political alliances".[3] A defeated adversary was almost always won by this gesture. Umm Salamah (Hind) was a close relative of the leading man of the Makhzūm clan, Juwayriyah was the daughter of the tribe of al-Muṣṭaliq, who were defeated by the Muslims. All the Apostle's marriages, Watt observes, "can be seen to have a tendency to promote friendly relations in the political sphere."[4] The Union with Rayḥānah,[5] was in fact a political announcement that the Apostle had closed the chapter of bitterness and was making another attempt to win the friendship of the B. Qurayẓah through marriage with a lady of their clan. The gesture would have been meaningless and empty if all the male adults had been slain and their women and children sold as slaves. The Apostle tried to strengthen his negotiated peace with the State of Khaybar by the same sign of goodwill. He took Ṣafīyah in marriage and thus sealed his alliance with the most important Jewish power in theḤijāz.

[1] S.D. Goitein (*Jews and Arabs*, p. 127) calls it 'Jewish-Arab symbiosis'.
[2] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* Kitāb al Buyūᶜ, Vol. III, pp. 73-74.
[3] Rodinson, *Mohammed*, pp. 280-81.
[4] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 287.
[5] *Ibid*,. p. 288. Rayḥānah was a widow from the B. Qurayẓah.

The result of the two peace treaties, at Ḥudaybiyah and Khaybar, was a great success. Two years later (1.I 630/10.IX 8), when the Apostle marched to Mecca, his army numbered 10,000 men as compared to 1,600 in 628 (6 A.H.). Ḥudaybiyah and Khaybar had paid a great dividend.

Watt finds it "interesting to speculate on what would have happened had the Jews come to terms with Muḥammad instead of opposing him. At certain periods they could have secured very favourable terms from him, including religious autonomy[1], and on that basis the Jews might have become partners in the Arab empire and Islam a sect of Jewry. How different the face of the world would be now, had that happened!"[2] Unfortunately a declining elite does not act that way.

Among the migratory peoples of ancient times the Greeks, the Italians and the Hebrews "looked upon their neighbours with greater apprehension than did any of the others. These three peoples lived in deep fear of the societies beyond, and even among themselves there was mutual antagonism and distrust."[3] While the Greeks and the Italians had settled by the beginning of the Christian era, the Jews, due to their unfortunate circumstances, retained the characteristic of a migratory society. We have noted earlier that the B. Qaynuqāᶜ, the B. al-Naḍīr and the B. Qurayẓah bore their misfortunes alone. No other Jewish tribe moved to help them. They had shown the same 'mutual antagonism and distrust' at the Battle of Buᶜāth. "They were continually conscious, indeed too conscious, of a distinction between their society and others, between themselves and the out-group".[4] Their apprehension over strangers and foreigners prevented them from accepting the invitation to join the *ummah*. Things became far more difficult, because they formed an elite group, which would have lost its exclusiveness by joining an out-group. Even where the Jews have broken physical restrictions of a gentile-instituted ghetto, the ghetto as a Jewish institution holding the Jews under intellectual

[1] Islam in any case gave religious autonomy to the Jews and it lasted in the form of the "millet" system up to the downfall of the Ottomans.

[2] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 219.

[3] Richard Freeman, *Repentance and Revolt: A Psychological Approach to History* (Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970), p. 29.

[4] Freeman, p. 32.

repression has survived. Unfortunately the Jews of the Ḥijāz as if by instinct withdrew physically and mentally to their *uṭum*.

In less than twenty years after the death of the Apostle[1] they demolished the walls of their mental and spiritual *uṭum* and walked out to accept the challenge of a Muslim society which opened for them the doors of its mosques, its schools, its bazars, markets and civil service, for education, social assimilation and their participation in the civic and political life. They took the fullest advantage of the somatic, intellectual, and spiritual comforts offered by the dominant elite without disappearing as a marginal minority. They joined the *ummah* as sustaining members. For seven hundred years their destiny was bound with that of the Muslims.

Every phase of Islamic growth was accompanied by a positive and creative reaction among Jews. Every phase of Muslim breakdown was accompanied by a disintegration: a golden age when Spain's wealth grew; humiliation and exile when it dwindled.[2]

Carmichael considers it "very strange that while Christianity was gradually to disappear in most parts of Muslim Empire, Jewish communities survived and flourished—in Bukhara, formerly a great Christian centre; in Yemen, once a Christian bishopric; and in North Africa, the home of Saint Augustine".[3] It would not look strange if the restricted nature and the limits of the Muslim-Jewish conflict were seen in their proper perspective.

[1] ʿUmar appointed Bostenai as the Exilarch in 640. See Alexander David Goode, "The Jewish Exilarchate During the Arabic Period in Mesopotamia From 637 A.D. to 1258 A.D." (John Hopkins University, Ph.D. thesis 1940), p. 33.

[2] Rivkin, *The Shaping of Jewish History*, p. 138.

[3] Joel Carmichael, *The Shaping of the Arabs: A Study in Ethnic Identity* (New York, 1967), p. 54.

EPILOGUE

There was never a time from the birth of Islam to the present when large number of Jews did not live under Moslem rule. There is no phase in Islamic history that does not resonate through Jewish history and no form of Islam that does not have its Jewish counterpart. And though during many periods the differences between Islam and Judaism were stressed to rationalize hostility, these differences also were responsible for catalyzing some of the most creative Jewish achievements of the Middle Ages.

Under the Umayyads and the Abbasids, Jews prospered and found their way to virtually every part of the Moslem empire. Thriving communities sprang up in North Africa and Spain. The Abbasids, particularly, encouraged Jewish enterprise, with the result that by the tenth century a small but significant class of large-scale merchants and bankers had come to play a prominent role in the finances of the caliph. The policies of the caliphs were pragmatic, following from a reading of their own interests, not from a reading of the Koran.

The relationship of Jews to Islam was complex, at times positive, at times negative. During the tenth century, Jews living under the Abbasids in the east were experiencing a major breakdown, while Jews in Andalusia were embarking on a golden age. In the twelfth century, Maimonides fled from a hostile Islam in Andalusia, tarried briefly in hostile Islamic North Africa, only to become welcome in Islamic Egypt, where he became physician to the vizier of Saladin. Islam created climates favourable to Jewish creativity and climates altogether inimical to Jews. The record is clear: the differences setting Islam apart from Judaism did not always generate hostility.

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INDEX

Aaron, 30.
Abbasids(s), 6, 7, 8 and n, 10, 17, 21, 22, 39, 122, 126.
Abbott, Nabia, 63, 87, 88, and n.
Abū al-ʿAbbās, 9.
Abū Dāʾūd, 22, 23, 64n, 77, 78, 79, 91, 111, 112.
Abū al-Fidāʾ, 3.
Abū Hurayrah, 101, 102, 105, 121.
Acton, Lord, 23.
Adhraʿāt, 27, 94.
Adler,. J. G. Chr., 3.
Aḥbār, 15.
Aḥzāb, al-., 15, 42, 43, 44, 68, 70, 74, 77, 78n, 79, 91 and n, 95, 111, 112.
Ali, Ameer, 23n.
Ali, Muhammad, 23n.
al-Ali, Saleh, Ahmad, 30n, 61n, 109n.
Amalek, 26 and n.
Altheim, F., 33 and n.
Asad, B., 68.
Ashjaʿ, 68.
Aws, Al-, 32, 33, 34, 40, 41, 45, 52, 53, 54, 57, 72, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 91, 92, 104 121.
Awzāʿī, Al-,. 89.
Ayham, Al-, 47.
Azraqī, al-, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad, 32 and n.
ʿAbbās al-, B., 6.
ʿAbbās, b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, 102.
ʿAbbās, Iḥsān, 7n.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Abbās, 93.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr, 12.
ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAtīk, 96.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Rawāḥah, 96, 97.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, 15.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣūriyā, 15.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salul al-ʿAwfī, 34, 36n, 37, 42, 43, 52, 57, 58, 59, 80, 106, 109, 113n, 122.
ʿAbd Allāh b. Unays, 97.
ʿAbd al-Ashhal, B., 72, 78, 79.
ʿAbd al- Malik, 6, 7.
ʿAbd al-Masīḥ ʿĀqib, 47.
ʿĀdiya (h), 27, 29.
ʿAfak, Abū, 36, 52, 53, 63, 81.
ʿAjlān, Mālik b., 32, 33, 104.
ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, 70, 83, 85, 86, 87, 91, 93, 101.
ʿAlqamah, Abū Ḥarithāh b., 47.
ʿĀmir, B., 63.
ʿĀmir b. al-Akwaʿ, 100.
ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Wudd b. Abū Qays, 70.
ʿAmr b. ʿAwf, B. 36, 81, 91.
ʿAmr b. a-ʿNuʿmān, 37.
ʿAmr b. Suʿdā al-Qurazī, 85.
ʿAqabah, al-,. 35, 45,
ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān, 36, 53 63, 80.
ʿAṣmāʾ bint Yazid, 41.
ʿAwf, B., 40, 41, 47n.
ʿAsqalānī, al- Ibn Ḥajar, 7n, 79.
ʿĀʾishah, 70n, 72, 79, 80, 82n, 83, 104.
ʿAzīz M.A., iii.
ʿAzīz M.D. iii.

Babylon (ian), 7, 8, 24, 28, 29, 30.
Badeau, John S. iv.
Badr, 18, 19, 35, 43, 55, 57, 58, 61, 62, 64, 77, 100, 108,
Baghdādī, al-, al-Khatīb, 7n, 89n.
Balādhurī al, 122n.
Bar Kochba, 85, 105, 120.
Barāʾ, al-, 34.
Baron, Salo, Wittmayer, 4 and n, 24n, 25, 26n, 29n, 88 and n, 116n.
Bashan, Eliezer, 8 and n.
Bayḍāwī, al-, 3, 60n, 61n, 115n, 118 and n.
Belfield, Eversley, 107n, 108n, 116 and n.
Bell, Richard, 88 and n, 104n, 118n.
Beteille, Andre, 106n.
Biʾr Maʿūnah, 62, 64, 87, 109.

Browne, Edward G., 9n.
Bu^{c}āth, 33, 34, 37, 54, 104, 108, 111, 124.
Bukhārī, al-, Muḥammad b. Ismā^{c}īl, Imām, 5, 7n, 11n, 20, 21, 22, 59, and n, 63n, 68n, 70n, 78 and n, 80, 81, 82 and n, 87, 88, 91, 92, 97, and n, 102n, 115n, 118n, 121n, 122n, 123n.
Baṭḥān, 61, 108.
Byzantine(s), 27, 41, 75, 112, 116, 120.

Caetani, Leone, 4 and n, 40n, 80 and n, 92n.
Carmichael, Joel, 52 and n, 125 and n.
Carter, Anne, 52n, 53n.
Caskel, Werner, 26 and n.
Clark, G. Kitson, 67.
Clive, John, 17n.

Dā^{c}is, 64.
Delbridge, A. IV.
Deuteronomy, 23.
Dhahabī, al-, 7n, 18.
Dharr, Abū, 15.
Dhimmah, ahl al (dhimmah) 4, 46n.
Dhū Nuwās, Yūsuf, 25, 34, 83, 103.
Dhū Qarad, 97.
Duri, A. A., 73n, 90n.
Ḍamrī, al-, ^{c}Amr b. Umayyah, 63.

Edomite, 26.
Elpherar (al-Farrā$^{\flat}$), 3 and n.
Exilarch (Exilarchate), 7, 8 and n 10, 17, 24, 94.

Fadak, 32, 34, 42, 103.
Faḍl, al-, Umm, bint al-Ḥārith, 54.
Fatimid (empire), 9n.
Fazārah, B., 68, 101, 116.
Freeman, Richard, 124n.
Finḥāṣ, 108.
Friedlaender, Israel, 10n, 29, 30n, 119n.
Fujār, 107.
Fück, Johann, 7n, 18n.

Gabrieli, Francesco, 23n, 29n, 117 and n.
Gagnier, J., 3.
Gaon. (Gaonate, Gaonic), 7, 8, 9n, 17, 24, 30.
Geiger, Abraham, 2 and n, 3, 4, 24.
Ghābah, al-, 97, 99.
Ghassān, 27.
Ghaṭafān, B. 64, 67, 68, 70, 96, 97, 99, 110, 113, 116.
Ghazzāl b. Samaw$^{\flat}$al, 91.
Ghifār, B., 99.
Giffen, Lois A., IV.
Gil, Moshe, 43 and n.
Goitein, S. D., 2 and n, 3 and n, 4, 8 and n, 9n, 29n, 53n, 123n.
Goldziher, Ignaz, 20 and n, 21n, 107n, 119n.
Goods, Alexander David, 125.
Graetz, H., 4 and n, 8 and n, 9n, 10n, 24n, 25n, 27 and n, 28n, 29, 30, 75n, 88 and n, 106n.
Grayzel, Solomon, 10 and n.
Grimme, H., 4, 118.
Guillaume, A., 7n, 16, 17n, 21, 22n, 54n, 56n, 62n.

Habīb, Ibn. 87 and n.
Hadl, B., 29.
Hagiography, 16.
Hartman, George W., 23.
Hijā$^{\flat}$, 107.
Hilberg, Raul, 85n.
Hirschberg, Joachim Wilhelm (Haim Z'ew), 4 and n, 8 and n.
Hishām, Ibn, 3n, 5, 14n, 15n, 18, 19 and n, 20n, 33n, 34n, 35n, 41n, 42n, 43n, 45n, 46n, 47n, 48n, 51n, 53n, 54n, 55 and n, 56n, 57n, 58n, 59 and n, 62n, 63n, 64n, 65n, 68n, 70n, 71n, 72n, 73n, 74n, 77 and n, 78n, 79n, 80n, 81n, 82n, 83n, 87n, 88n, 89n, 90 and n, 91n, 92n, 93n, 95n, 96n, 97n, 99n, 100n, 101n, 102n, 108n, 109n, 110n, 111n, 112n, 113n, 114n, 115n, 121n, 122n,

Ḥajji khalīfah, 22n.
Ḥakam, 77, 78, 80, 92n, 93.
Ḥamidullah, Muhammad, 74n, 114n, 39 and n, 46n.
Ḥanbal, Aḥmad b., 11, 18, 22, 87, and n.
Ḥanīfa, Abū, 89.
Ḥārith, al-, Bint, 82.
Ḥārith, al-B., 40.
Ḥārithah, B., 41, 91.
Ḥassān b. Thābit, 90.
Ḥātib b. Abū Balta^{c}ah, 77n.
Hayyabān, al-, Ibn, 15.
Ḥijr, al-, 26.
Ḥilf, 32.
Ḥimyār (Ḥimyarites), 25, 27, 29, 103, 104, 105.
Ḥirah, 34.
Horovitz, Joseph, 4 and n, 7n, 11n, 12, 13 and n, 18n, 27n, 28n.
Ḥublah, Ba^{c}l-, 34, 40.
Ḥudaybiyah, al-, 16, 46, 52, 93, 96, 97, 100, 111, 113, 115, 124.
Ḥuḍayr, al-, b. Simāk, 37.
Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, 15, 65,67, 83, 84, 91, 95, 96, 105, 106, 109, 110, 115n.

Ibn Abī Khaithamah, 46n.
Ibn Ḥabīb, 87 and n.
Ibn Kathīr, 41n, 44n, 46n, 71n, 76n, 77n, 83n. 118n.
Ibn Khaldūn, 2, 85.
Ibn Khallikān, 7n, 11n, 18 and n, 89n.
Ibn Manẓūr. 81n, 90n.
Ibn Sa^{c}d. ibn, 3n, 5, 6, 7n, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 41 and n, 48n, 55n, 57, 58, 59 and n, 60, 64n, 65, 68n, 73 and n, 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 87, 89n, 96n, 97 and n, 99n, 101n, 108, 109n 110 and n, 111n, 113n.
Idumaean, 30.
Imru$^{\circ}$al-Qays, 45.
Isaiah, 25n.
Ishāq, ibn, Muḥammad. 5, 6, 7 and n, 9, 10, 11, and n, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 35, 40, 41, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 97, 99, 100, 102, 108, 110, 114, 115, 121.
Iṣbahānī, Abū al-Faraj, 23, 26 and n, 64.
Iṣfahānī, al-, Abū Na^{c}aym, 63n.
Iṣfahānī, al-, Ḥamzah, 34n.
Isfahānī, al-, Rāghib, 81n, 90n.
^{c}Imād, al-, ^{c}Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanbalī, ibn, 60 and n.
'Isā, ibn, Obadiah, 9 and n, 10, 17.

Jafnah, 40.
Jafri, Husain Mohammad, iii
Jāhiliyah, 38.
Jahl, Abu (Abū al-Ḥakam ^{c}Amr b. Hishām). 55.
Jaḥash, ^{c}Abd Allāh b., 55n, 93.
Jāḥiz, 34n.
Jermiah, 25n.
Jiḥash, 15.
Jizyah, 49, 123.
Job, 25n.
Jones, J.M.B., 11n, 14n, 40n.
Judham, B., 29.
Jumaḥī, al-, Muhammad b. Sallām, 53.
Jusham B., 40, 41.
Juwayriyah, 123.

Ka^{c}b b. Asad al-Qurazī, 70, 72 and n, 73, 74, 75, 76, 83, 91, 95, 105, 106, 111.
Ka^{c}b b. al-Ashraf, 28, 53, 62, 63, 80, 97.
Ka^{c}b b. Mālik, 34.
Kāhin (Kahinūn) 29, 30.
Khandaq, al-, 44. See *Al-Aḥzāb*.
Khāṭmah, B., 81.
Khaybar, 3, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 24, 30, 34, 41, 42, 44, 50, 52, 60, 65, 67, 68, 88, 93, **95—102**, 103, 106, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 123, 124.

Khazraj, al-. 32, 33, 34, 40, 45, 52, 53, 54, 57, 67, 68, 72, 77, 96, 104, 121.
Khudrī, al-, Abū Saʿīd, 79.
Khurradādhbih, Ibn, 33 and n.
Kinānah b. al-Rabīʿ b. Abū al-Huqayq, 65, 67, 95, 100, 115n.
Kister, M.J., 61 and n, 62n. 63 and n, 87, 88n, 119n.
Kuper, Leo., 56 and n.

Lakhmids, 34.
Lammens, Henri, 4 and n, 20 and n, 32 and n, 34 and n, 101, 116 and n, 118.
Lane E.W., 90n.
Lahīʿa, Ibn, 63.
Leff, Gordon, 6n.
Levy, Barbara, 86n.
Lewis, Bernard. 1, 48n.
Lex talionis, 38.
Leszynsky, Rudolf, 2, 4.
Lichtenstadter, Ilse, 45.
Lubābah, Abū, b. ʿAbdul Mundhir, 72, 73n, 76, 77 and n, 79, 80.
Lukacs, John, 5n.

Maʿbad b. Mālik Anṣārī, 73.
Macaulay, 17 and n.
Maddocks, Melvin, 17n.
Maḥmūd b. Maslamah, 100.
Makḥūl, 7n.
Makhzūm, 123.
Mālik b. Abū Qawqal, 64.
Mālik b. al-Anas, Imām, 7, 11, 12, 14, 16.
Mālik b. al-Ṣayf 62.
Mansūr, al-, 7, 9, 10.
Margoliouth, D.S., 20 and n, 28 and n, 29 and n, 45n, 58, 76 and n.
Margolis, Max. L., 8 and n, 9n.
Marḥab, 101.
Marx Alexander, 8 and n, 9n.
Maudūdī, Abul Aʿlā, 39n, 51n.
Messiah, 9, 10, 119, 120.
Muʿāwiyah, 91, 93.
Muḥammad b. Maslamah, 64, 80, 100, 101.
Muḥayyiṣah b. Masʿūd, 19, 114.
Muir, Sir William, 4 and n, 118.
Mujāhid b. Jabr, 76.
Mundhir III. 34.
Mundhir IV., 34.
Muqannaʿ, al-, 9.
Murrah, B., 68.
Mūsa b. ʿUqbah, 16, 24.
Musayyib, al-, Saʿīd, b., 7 and n.
Muslim, Abū, 9.
Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, 5, 20, 21, 59 and n. 78, 79, 82, 88, 91, 92.
Muṣṭaliq, al-, B., 43, 44, 123.

Nabatean, 26.
Nabbash b. Qays, 91.
Naḍīr al-, B., 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 24, 26, 28, 29, 35, 36n, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63-66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 88, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 101, 109, 110, 115n, 121, 122, 124.
Naisābūrī, ʿAbd Allāh, 21.
Najjār, al-, B., 40, 41, 82.
Najrān, 14, 27, 34, 48, 75, 83, 84, 88, 103, 105.
Nās, al-, Ibn Sayyid, 7n, 11n, 12 and n.
Nawawī, al-, 92, 93.
Nemoy, Leon, 8.
Nicholson, R.A., 85n.
Nöldeke, Theodore, 11, 42, 118.
Nuʿman III., 34.

Obermann, J., 48n.
O'Leary, De Lacy 30n, 119n.

Paret, Rudi, 39, 51n.
Peters, F.E., 37.
Petersen, Erling Ladewig, 6 and n, 18 and n.
Polybius, 103.

Qāʾitbey, Sulṭān al-Ashraf, 22.
Qarda al-, 97.
Qarqarah, al-, 97, 113.
Qatādah, ʿĀṣim b. ʿUmār, 7n, 11, 12, 13, 61, 78.

Qaylah, B., 32, 33, 34, 52, 53.
Qaynuqāᶜ, B., 3, 10, 13, 19, 24, 26, 29, 30, 35, 40, 41 and n, 42, 43, **51-62,** 65, 66, 70, 80, 101, 108, 109, 110, 114, 122, 123, 124.
Qays b. Maᶜdikarīb, 45.
Qays b. Makhramah, 7.
Qurayẓah, B., 3, 10, **12,** 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 33, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 50, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, **68-94,** 95, **100,** 101, 110, 111, 122, 123, 124.
Quraẓī, al-, Abū Mālik b. Thaᶜlabah b. Abū Malik, 14.
Quraẓī, al-, ᶜAtiyah, 15, 81.
Quraẓī, al-, Muḥammad b. Kaᶜb, 14.

Raglan, Lord, 20 and n.
Rajiᶜ, al-, 99.
Rayḥānah, 123 and n.
Reiske, J. J. 3.
Reissner, H.G., 29, and n.
Riḍwān, al-, 113.
Rifāᶜah b. Qays, 108.
Rifāᶜah b. Samawᵓal al-Quraẓī, 85.
Rivkin, Ellis, 121n, 125n, 126.
Robson, James, 13 and n, 14n, 20 and n, 21 and n.
Rodinson, Maxime, 51, 52 and n, 53n, 64, 95, 123n.
Rosenthal, Franz, 11n, 60n.

Saboras, 17.
Saᶜd, B., 68.
Saᶜd b. Muᶜādh, 35, 70, 72, 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94.
Saᶜd b. ᶜUbādah, 79.
Saḥbāᵓ, al-, 99.
Sāᶜidah, B. 40, 41.
Salᶜ, 68.
Salīm, B., 40.
Sālim b. ᶜUmayr, 81.
Sallām b. Abū al-Ḥuqayq (Abū Rāfiᶜ), 65, 67, 96, 97, 115n.
Salām b. Mishkam, 64, 121.
Salamah b. ᶜAmr b. al-Akwaᶜ al-Aslamī, 97, 100.
Salama b. Faḍl b. al-Abrash al-Anṣarī, 56n.
Salmah bint al-Saiᵓigh, 34.
Samaw'al-, al-, 27, 28, 29, 45 and n.
Samhūdī, al-. 22, 23n, 29n, 30n, 32n, 33n, 44, 68n, 90, 91n, 104n.
Sammāk, 95.
Samuel, 23.
Schacht, Joseph, 20 and n, 50n, 60n, 89n, 92n.
Serene (Serenus) 9.
Sergeant, R.B., 39 and n, 44 and n, 45 and n. 46n, 83n.
Shaban, M.A., 27 and n.
Shāfiᶜī, Imām, 11, 60 and n, 89 and n.
Shahid, Irfan. 25n, 34 and n, 83n, 88n, 104n.
Shahrastānī, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Karīm, 9n, 10n.
Shās b. Qays, 54, 108.
Shuᶜbah b. al-Ḥajjāj, 11.
Shuṭaybah, al- B., 41.
Shaykhayn, 68.
Silkān b. Salāmah b. Waqsh, 80.
Simeon of Beth Arsham, 58.
Sinbadh, 9.
Smith, W. Robertson, 32n, 43 and n.
Stiehl, R., 33 and n.
Sufyān, Abū, b. Ḥarb, 15, 64, 68, 70, 95.
Sufyān b. ᶜUyaynah, 11.
Sulaym, B, 68.
Sunaynah, Ibn, 19, 20, 114.
Suwailam, 41.
Suwayd, 64.
Ṣaḥīfah, 35, **37-50,** 51, 91, 94, 119.
Ṣafīyah bint ᶜAbd al Muṭṭalib, 70.
Ṣāfiyah bint Ḥuyayy b. Akhṭab, 15, 30n, 102, 123.
Ṣāmit, al-, ᶜUbadah b, 59.
Siffīn, 93.

Tabūk, 41, 77.
Taḥkīm, 92, 93.
Talmūd, (Talmudic), 3, 29, 30, 34.
Talmudical Ordinances, 9.
Taymāᵓ, 25, 32, 34, 88, 103.

Thaʿlabah, B., 29, 32n, 40, 41.
Thaʿlabī, al-, Jabal b. Jawwāl, 92.
Tirmidhī 30n.
Torrey, Charles Cutler, 4 and n, 11n, 32 and n, 104 and n.
Tubbaʿ, 53, 71, 74.
Ṭabarī, al-, 17, 54n, 56 and n, 60n, 61n, 63n, 65n, 77n, 97 and n.
Ṭalḥah b. ʿUbayd Allāh, 41.
Ṭulayḥah b. Khuwaylid, 68.

Uḥud, 19, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 100, 109,
Ukhdūd, 83.
Umāmah, Abū, 79.
Umayyad(s), 6, 7, 9, 16, 21, 22, 39, 93, 122.
Umayyah, B, 6.
Umayyah, b. Zayd, 91.
Umm Salamah 123,
ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit, 59.
Ubayd, Abū, 46n, 49 and n.
ʿUbayd, Mount of Banū, 68.
ʿUbaydah, B., 81.
ʿUbaydah, Abū, b. al-Jarrah, 48.
ʿUmar, 7n, 24, 59, 87, 112, 113, 116, 121, 125n.
ʿUmar II, 7n.
ʿUmayr b. ʿAdiy al-Khatmī, 81.
Ummah, 37-50, 51, 52, 94, 116, 124, 125,
ʿUrwah, Hishām b., 11.
Usque, Samuel, 24 and n.
Ustadhsis, 9.
ʿUtbah b. Rabīʿah, 14.
ʿUyaynah b. Hiṣn b. Hudhayfah. b. Badr al-Fazārī, 68, 97, 99.

Vaglieri, L. Veccia, 86n.
Vida, G. Levi Della, 16 and n, 17n.

Wādī al-Furʿ, 99.
Wādī al-Qura, 32, 34, 88, 103.
Wāʾil, B., 67.
Wāqidī, al-, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar, 3n, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 55n, 56 and n, 57n, 58, 59 and n, 60, 61n, 65 and n, 68n, 71, 76 and n, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 87, 88 and n, 89n, 90, 91n, 96n, 97 and n, 108, 109 and n, 110 and n, 113n.
Watt, Montgomery, 4, 18n, 21 and n, 28n, 32n, 39 and n, 40 and n, 41 and n, 42n, 44, 45, 46n, 51n, 52n, 55n, 68 and n, 80, 86 and n, 92n, 105, 106n, 111n, 122n, 123 and n, 124 and n.
Wellhausen J., 40 and n.
Wensinck, A.J.,4 and n.
Weregeld, 38.
Wherry E. M., 42, 44n, 118 and n.
Wolfenson Israel, 4 and n, 27 and n, 107n.
Wüstenfeld, Ferdinand, 5n, 14n.

Yaḥya b. Ādam, 23, 60 and n, 89, 102 and n.
Yaḥya b. Maʿīn, 11.
Yāmīn, 15.
Yaʿqūbī, al-, Ibn Wāḍih, 27n, 29 and n. 30n, 32 and n.
Yaqūt, 11n, 33 and n.
Yāsir, 101.
Yazīd, II., 9.
Yazīd b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Qusayṭ, 73n.
Yazīd b. Rumān, 13.
Yehudi ben Naham, 17.
Young, F.M.. 2.
Yūsuf, Abū, 59, 89 and n, 93.

Zābir, al-, b. Baṭā al-Quraẓi, 83, 84.
Ẓafar, 91.
Zamakhsharī, al-, 60n, 61n, 65n, 115n, 118 and n,
Zārim, Al-yusayr b., 96, 97, 113, 115.
Zaʿurah, B., 27.
Ziadeh, Nicola, iii
Zubayr, Al-, b. al-ʿAwwām, 83, 85, 86, 87, 91.
Zuhrī, Al-, 7, 11, 12, 13, 24, 73 and n, 89n.
Zurayq, B., 41.
Zurqānī, al-, 63n.

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